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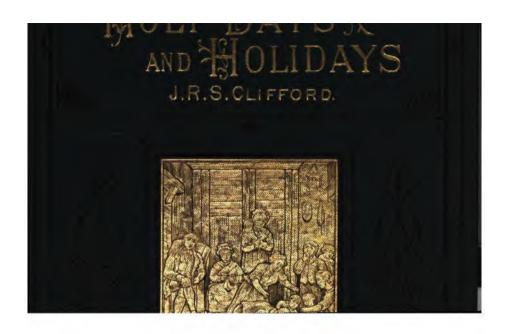
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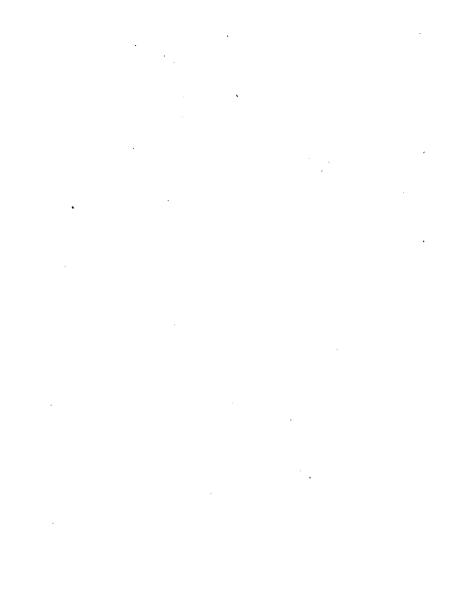
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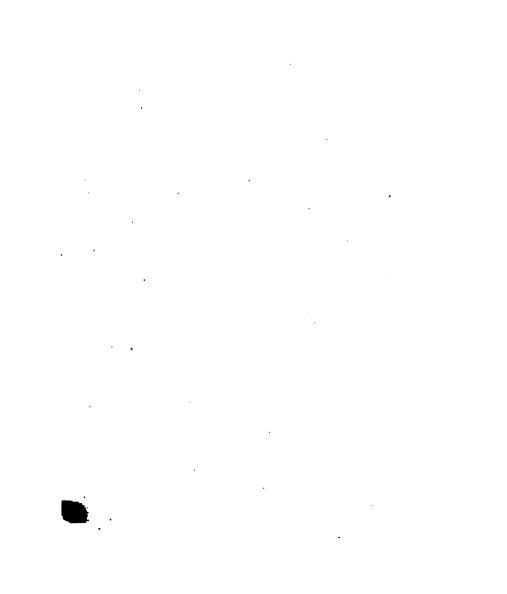
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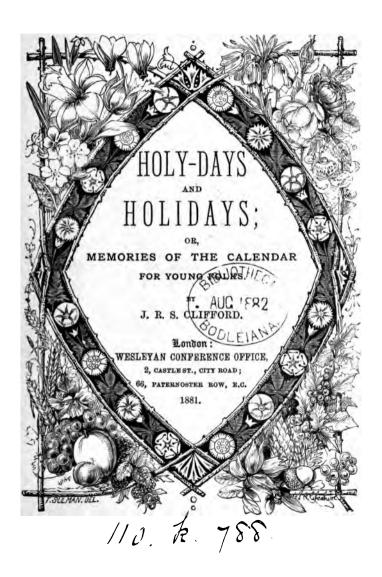




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THE FOUR SPASONS.



HAYMAN BROTHERS AND LILLY,
PRINTERS,
HATTON HOUSE, FARRINGDON ROAD,
LONDON, E.G.

PREFACE.

superstitions, customs, or games connected with the Calendar have been treated in many volumes of a goodly size, yet sometimes such as might, in the opinion of young people, be chargeable with mustiness and dulness. These customs prevailed amongst our British forefathers in the olden time, and especially during those centuries belonging to the 'dark ages,' when our country was under the power of the Romish Church. It is a subject that has a sad side, certainly, but there is also instruction, and not a little amusement to be gained from it, nor is it one easily exhausted. In our own day, writers upon history are succeeding in

bringing many interesting facts to light which had been overlooked before; and there cannot be a doubt

that by enquiring into the habits of the people, we gain more real knowledge of the history of a nation, than from the details of battles and sieges, or the doings of warriors and statesmen. It is from the little incidents of the daily domestic, or the occasional holiday life of our ancestors, that we may picture to ourselves best what 'manner of men' they were, and see in what ways we excel them. That we do excel them we may adopt as a settled conclusion; yet there are things which if they saw, they might shake their heads wisely at us, and express surprise, that, with all our advantages, we do not know and act better in this fourth quarter of the nineteenth century.

The influence of the Bible, and the progress of civilization have done much, indeed, for the elevation of our people, and towards the chasing away of superstition and childish beliefs; but Britain has not yet become what she ought to be. Not only are there old errors that still require to be rooted up, and which hold to the ground firmly; there are, beside these, new errors (old ones dressed up afresh generally) brought in by those who would Romanise our religious and domestic life, and bring in again many of those superstitious customs our Puritan ancestors contended against, polished up or glossed over to suit the present time. Happily, the Calendar is not to the majority of us what it was to the men, women, and children of even

three hundred years ago, not to speak of a more benighted period, and in noticing some of their doings on the saints' days and other holidays, we may be interested and amused, but we shall find very little to admire or to imitate. Though we must not be too hard in our censures; our forefathers were without many of the privileges that we possess, and many of them lived honestly up to the light they had.



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CLY-DAYS and holidays! Between these words there is a great difference, yet the two had their origin in the same idea: that is, of days set apart to sacred uses. It suited the Church of Rome to introduce into the Calendar many days of religious observance besides Sunday, since by means of several of these money could be gained, and all of them helped to advance the power of the priest. Then, although there was an 'ecclesiastical colouring' given to these days, the Church was willing to be popular, by allowing various liberties in connection with them. Therefore, on the saint's day (and, in fact, on the Lord's day as well) after the service, or mass, had been gone through, rich and poor alike were free to follow any pursuit or game they might fancy. If there was an appearance of 'holiness' attaching itself to the morning service, it was woefully contradicted by the 'unholy' character that frequently belonged to the afternoon doings; so there came over the minds of men a feeling that the amusement of such a day was the chief object of it, and the holy-day at last sank down to be nothing beyond a holi-day.

But all our festive days have not come from the Romish Church. Every civilized nation has had its times of mourning or of rejoicing. The Greeks and Romans kept such, and many other peoples who lived long, long ago. Some even of the nations that were almost barbarous had them, and there are British holidays that appear to have come down from the Druids, or from the old Celts. Also there were Roman, perhaps Grecian, festivities which have left traces in these islands of the west. In every country where time is reckoned by a yearly calendar it is, I believe, usual to take some notice of the passing away of the old year and the coming in of the new.

New Year's observances have to a great extent fallen into disuse throughout England, but the first day of the year is still specially observed in Scotland. Perhaps the indifference that has crept over us is due to the fact that we begin the year at an inclement season, and no doubt there would be a special fitness in making the year to begin in spring, when nature is clothing herself with her garb of fresh green. Some centuries back it really was the custom to commence the year at Lady Day, and this fact has caused a good deal of confusion in dates.

In preparation for New Year's morning, our ancestors went about from house to house, offering good wishes and congratulations. Large or small parties

of young people strolled along the streets and roads, singing at the doors of houses a rude versicle, rather similar to the Christmas carol, asking in return a small gift of some kind. It appears to have been the custom in many towns for these to go masked, as 'mummers,' or with painted faces. When Dr. Samuel Johnson was in Scotland, he was told of an odd custom belonging to the Western Islands. On the eve of the New Year a man dressed in a cowhide went to the hall of the laird, with other men, who beat upon the hide with their sticks. As he marched in, the company assembled pretended to be frightened. and all left, the door being then bolted upon them by the men that had thus got in. After a little while, the door was unbarred, and those were allowed to enter who could repeat a certain verse of poetry carefully.

Sometimes the strollers carried the wassail bowl from door to door, allowing those who gave them money to taste its contents. The name of this was significant, for we are told that it comes from the Anglo-Saxon waes hael, that is, 'Be in health.' But, unfortunately, draughts were often taken from this bowl which did not help to produce either health of mind or body. In the wassail bowl was wine or spiced ale, upon which floated roasted apples, and the name commonly given to the mixture was 'lamb's



wool.' Probably this bowl is really a relic of an old pagan rite; the Roman Catholics, however, did not forbid the practice of passing it about at 'New Year's tide,' only according to their usual custom they gave the wassail bowl a different name, and called it the 'cup of charity.' Even in monasteries, such a bowl was generally put upon the abbot's table, all comers being permitted to drink from it. Very likely we have in the 'grace cup,' or 'loving cup,' which is still formally handed round at a few city or state dinners, a remembrance of the old wassail bowl. Doubtless the wassailers were expected to contribute towards the funds of the Church, and in return they got the priests' blessing.

In one particular our ancestors, though they might not be very rich, appear to have shown great generosity. They were very liberal with New Year's gifts. To some persons these were a serious yearly expense, and, what was rather unreasonable, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries all the court were expected to offer a present to the king or queen. 'Good Queen Bess,' we are told, almost clothed herself from the proceeds of the various and costly gifts brought to her palace on the eve of the New Year by her courtiers, the gentry, and even by the citizens. In France the custom of sending New Year's presents is observed by persons of every class. Of late, New Year's cards

have become popular with us, and we English folks are apt to make frequent use of the phrase, 'A Happy New Year!' Well would it be if every one who uttered this good wish did his best to make the new year bright and cheerful to others!

Now-a-days, it is not uncommon to form family or friendly parties, with the intention of seeing, as people say, 'the old year out, and the new year in,' the party not breaking up till some time after midnight. close of the old year is, however, scarcely a season for merry-making; and should it not be spent in religious services, it might well be given to quiet thought over the past, and to resolves that we will, God helping us. turn the future to better account. Amongst our forefathers, it was most general to celebrate the 'birthday of the year' by a gathering on New Year's Day, which was, in several respects, a repetition of the Christmas festivities. Again was the boar's head wreathed with garlands, and, having a lemon in its mouth, placed in the centre of the table, while at the two ends were a fattened turkey and a huge chine of bacon. After the ample feast was disposed of, the evening hours were spent in a variety of games, blindman's buff being an especial favourite; songs or ballads were also sung. The lawyers of Lincoln's Inn had a custom of choosing at Christmas one from among them who took the mock title of king, and he had a marshal, with a steward,

to attend upon him. His honours came to an end at a farewell feast on New Year's Day. But in most places playing at king and queen belonged rather to Twelfth Day, as we shall see in our next chapter.





LD writers tell us that a New Year's present may be given as late as the 6th of January, the twelfth day after Christmas. In several country towns and villages, a century or two ago, it was rather awkward for those persons who were unwilling to part with money, and refused to bestow gifts on those who thought they had a right to have them. If they persisted in opposing the demands made upon them until Twelfth Day, parties of lads would sometimes punish their stinginess in a very summary way. If the offender was a man, he would be mounted upon what was called a stang-which was an uncomfortable horse of wood,—and so borne along until his cries for mercy, or a money offering, obtained his release. A woman was placed in a large basket, to receive the like treatment. Happily, in this age, outrages similar to these could scarcely be committed; and surely this process was not the best way of reforming an ungenerous or miserly individual.

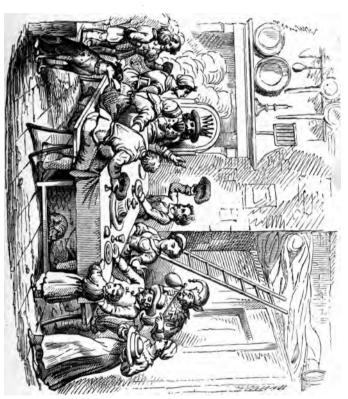
A peculiar custom was formerly observed in districts that abounded with fruit trees. The farmers went out at sunset on Twelfth Night, and when they had repeated some quaint rhymes, they drank a health to the apples and pears, flinging a portion of the liquor over the trees. This is evidently connected either with the Greek and Roman fashion of offering libations, or else with the Druidical rites of the early Britons. A Herefordshire custom (said also to have been followed in other midland counties) belonging to this night, was the kindling of twelve small fires, having a large one placed in the centre, in a field of young wheat, and round these an uncouth dance was performed, with much noise and shouting. This appears to be suggestive of the ancient worship of Baal which left its impression for many centuries upon some parts of England, while in Ireland traces of it remained till the beginning of this century.*

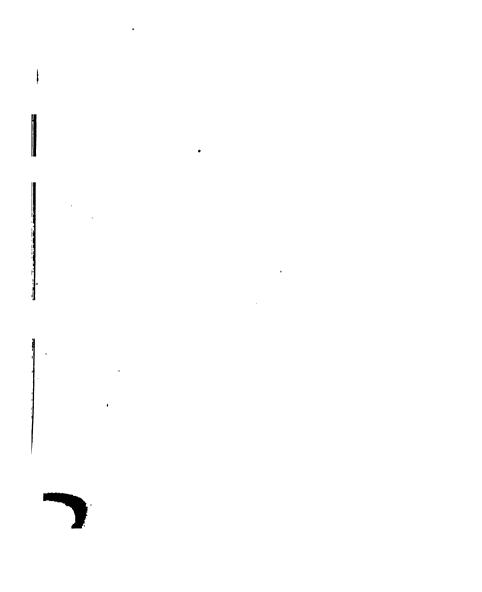
The Romish clergy of early Saxon and Norman times did not, as I have remarked, try to uproot old superstitions, but they gave a new name to them sometimes. This wassailing of the apples, however it had its beginning, seems a practice near akin to the blessing of animals even now practised in Roman Catholic countries. If, as is probable, the parish priest blessed the bowl before it was used, he would take care to have his share of the autumn fruit.

It has been also imagined that the thirteen fires represented our Lord and the twelve apostles.

But Twelfth Day is also known as the festival of the Epiphany. This had, of course, a purely Christian origin; it was in remembrance of the manifestation of our Saviour to the Gentile nations, in the persons of the three magi, or 'wise men of the east.' There was a tradition in the Church about the names of these men, and the nature of their gifts. Melchior, says the story, was an old man, he brought gold; Jasper, a youth, presented frankincense; the third, Balthasar, who was middle aged, offered the myrrh. A Dutch painter, in delineating the group, went amusingly beyond the tradition; for when painting the 'visit of the magi,' he drew one of the three in the act of presenting a model of a man-of-war, intended, I suppose, as a plaything for the infant Christ! It may be, Greswell thinks, that the Church is wrong in the date it has fixed for the coming of the magi to behold Him Who was the 'Light of the Gentiles;' that author believes it was several months after His birth.

The election of a king and queen on Twelfth Night had in it a reference to the three 'wise men,' who were also supposed to have been kings; what the cake had to do with the festival is uncertain. Twelfth-cakes as now made are not like those of other days; in an original recipe for an Epiphany-cake we find the chief ingredients are honey, flour, ginger, and pepper, which would hardly be agreeable to most of us. Draw-





ing paper characters is a modern fashion; our ancestors. instead, put into the cake a bean, and the person who got this became king or queen, and chose a partner. A child, as we are told, was sometimes placed under the table upon which the cake was being cut, to name those who were to receive the slices of cake as they were taken off, lest there should be any unfairness. An Epiphany king, or 'king of the bean,' was, during the reign of some of our monarchs, appointed by a royal warrant; for we have an entry in the reign of Edward III., which states that Regan, one of the court minstrels, received a sum of money on being chosen the king for that year. This sham dignity did not always cease with the evening, for the title of 'king' and 'queen' was occasionally held, by the individuals obtaining the honour, for a number of days after. Often they wore paper or tinsel crowns.

But one of the most singular things that was permitted by the clergy about the time of the Epiphany, or between that and Christmas, was the choice by the mob in a cathedral town of some one who was called the 'bishop of fools.' This bishop, with a crowd following him, dressed up in as ridiculous a manner as was possible, masked, or with blackened faces, went into the cathedral, and there, in a very irreverent way, mimicked the usual service of the mass. After this, seated in a carriage, the mock bishop drove about

the town, and pretended to bless the people who assembled, while his attendants pelted them with dirt. So far were the clergy from censuring such improper proceedings during the years that preceded the Reformation, that it is said some of them even took part in these disorderly and un-Christian revels; though it may be true that before the Church of Rome became so corrupt as in the later days, the priests did endeavour to stop these follies, which, perhaps, represented the ancient Saturnalia indulged in by the Romans, when masters and servants pretended to change places.

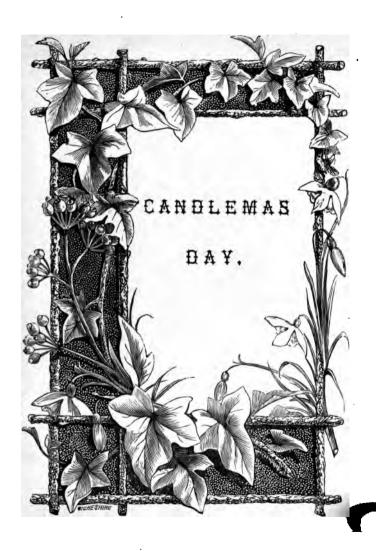
An author of the seventeenth century tells of a rather comical Twelfth Night custom he had seen. Into the cake there was introduced a piece of rag, and a bit of crooked stick; the rag was meant to point out the slattern amongst the party, and the stick was for the most unpleasant or cross man! Following the Twelfth Day was an anniversary quaintly called 'St. Distaff's Day,' with which are associated some rugged rhymes, by which people are advised to 'partly work and partly play,' and after that, 'every one to his own vocation;' to the particular employment or business, that is, which God has put in his way. Good advice this for us all, at any season of the year.

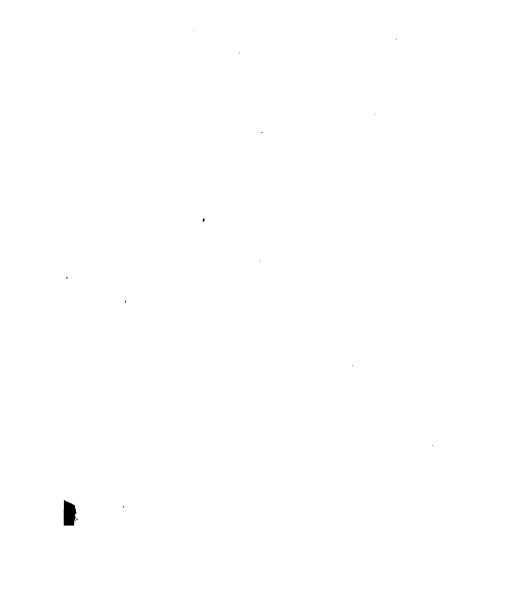


THE eve of St. Agnes' Day, the 21st of January, may remind us of the fact that all through his history man has had a desire to look into the future. I suppose he has more frequently been led to this rather by the fear of coming evil than by the hope of coming good. Even a savage has his signs of some sort, in which he puts his trust, or his sage, or 'cunning man,' whom he at one time rewards, and at another treats ill. Our early British forefathers believed in omens, and their priests, the Druids, took advantage of this to strengthen their power. Then the Roman settlers brought to our shores those superstitions that are recorded in the old classical writers, and which gave to so many natural objects mysterious meanings. Saxons, Danes, Normans have all added their share of fancies; and the Romish priests so far patronised several of the pagan divinations and charms as to join them to some real or pretended saint. So was it with the observances of St. Agnes' Eve, which were handed on from generation to generation; nor did the youths and maidens renounce them entirely after the Pope lost his sway over England. The divination, if not seriously believed in, was tried by way of amusement, a practice that we must admit was a bad one, in spite of the bit of romance which clings to it, and which will never be forgotten by those who have read the poet Keats' St. Agnes' Eve.

'St. Agnes,' writes Jerome, 'suffered martyrdom so young, and with so much bravery, that tongues and pens should never tire of celebrating her praise.' We are told she was put to death by Diocletian when she was thirteen years old, but historians cannot explain to us why she should have been chosen as the special saint of young maidens who desired to have dreams showing them their future husbands. Painters have usually drawn her with a lamb at her side, as an emblem of innocence, and a church was built upon the place of her supposed martyrdom, to which every year two white lambs were brought. Parties of maidens who kept the St. Agnes' fast abstained from meat all day, and then separated at even in silence, hoping, as Ben Jonson says, to be 'pleased with the promised sight.' Probably, had they eaten a hearty supper, they would have more certainly had remarkable, though possibly not very agreeable dreams. In The Mirror, a magazine of fifty years ago, a relic of this custom is spoken of as having been noticed in the north. According to some old authors, each maiden, before she went to bed, took a row of pins, and pulled them out one after another, saying a paternoster with each, retiring in full confidence that she should see the face or form of him who was some day to take her to a new home.







THIS day, the second of February, must have had at one time, like Saint Agnes' Day, its traditions connected with the unseen world, for Herrick, writing about this holy-day, says:—

'Down with the rosemary, and so
Down with the bays and misletoe;
Down with the holly, ivy, all
Wherewith ye decked the Christmas hall;
That so the superstitious find
Not one least branch there left behind;
For look, how many leaves there be
Neglected there, maids! trust to me,
So many goblins you shall see.'

From the observations of other authors we gather that people once thought there was some risk in allowing the Christmas evergreens to remain when Candlemas arrived, the supposed penalty being alarming sights from the spirit world, by day or by night, probably the latter. We laugh at such fears, but in the 'Dark Ages,' and even in later, lighter days, apprehensions of ghosts, goblins, and evil spirits troubled not only women and children, but strong men who could

brave hosts of enemies on the battle-field; so true is it that conscience makes cowards of us all. Priests, who should have shown the people that they had reason indeed to dread satanic influence, but not in the way they supposed, encouraged the fears which increased their power. 'Would you be safe from ghosts and the like?' they said; 'then be liberal to the Church, attend to all we tell you, buy also some sacred relics, and every evil spirit will be frightened away.'

The name of this day is of Popish origin. It is Candle-mass Day, because upon it, before mass was said, the clergy blessed candles for the whole year, and before the celebration there was a procession of persons bearing specially prepared candles. These, when taken home, were carefully kept, since they were supposed to be a protection from sprites and witches. There was formerly at Candlemas quite a blaze of candles, in the houses as well as in the churches, so that the waxchandlers did a large trade at this season. This led one of the Reformers to exclaim, in his disgust at the folly of priests and people, 'They light up candles to God, as if He lived in the dark; and do they not deserve to pass for madmen who offer lamps and candles to the Author and Giver of light?' But the Popish authors, who have always been clever in inventing explanations and excuses, have declared that the principal object of the illumination at Candlemas was to remind the world

of the words of good old Simeon, in the Gospel of Saint Luke, chapter ii. 29—32. Surely rather an unnecessary way of teaching by signs and symbols!

We may still see, exhibited in shop windows, candles as long as pike-staffs, and weighing several pounds each, which are purchased not only for decorations, but for a use (or we might say an abuse) like that which was once common through England at Candlemas. Candles in churches are now used not only by Roman Catholics, but also by those who in the Church of England try to imitate Popish practices so far as they dare. It has for many hundred years been the custom in Popish places of worship to burn candles at the 'evening litany,' or vespers, from All-Hallowmas to Candlemas, whether the darkness rendered them needful or not. Hence arose the saying:

'On Candlemas Day
Throw candle and candlestick away.'

The allusion is not to the slight lengthening of the daylight at the beginning of February, which does not certainly enable us to put away artificial lights during our evenings at home or abroad, but to the suspension of their employment in churches.

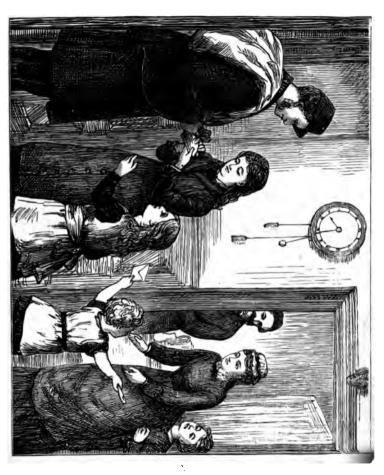
In the north of England, Brand, the antiquary, discovered a heathen custom still remaining, observed at the season of Candlemas. The women of a farmhouse

took a sheaf of oats, and wrapped about it some articles of women's clothing; this was then laid in a large basket, with a wooden club or stick beside it, the hour chosen for the purpose being just before bedtime. On leaving this odd object the mistress and her maids called out, 'Brud is come; Brud is welcome.' The next morning they looked amongst the ashes under the grate, expecting to find the marks of Brud's club there, and if they could trace something resembling the impression a club would make, that was rejoiced in as a sign that the farming season was to be a successful one. This was probably a relic of an incantation meant to secure the blessing of a pagan god. Country folks in some villages have a proverb that if Candlemas Day is fine there will be a cold spring; if it is dull or threatening, the spring will be mild, going, in fact, by the 'rule of contrary.'





THE histories have very little to tell us about St. L Valentine. He is said to have been martyred, and to have been a man remarkable for his goodness and charity. Let us hope this is true; but we might reasonably ask, 'What has that to do with the "valentines" which crowd shop windows for some weeks before the anniversary of this worthy comes round?' To the postmen, as a body, it is far from being a day of rejoicing; they have extra 'sorting' to do, and also to hurry about with a host of cumbrous packages. that cannot find room in their ordinary bags. Is it a sign of the times, that year by year the circulation of valentines decreases? It is not to the credit of the age that any sale at all is obtained for those of an unkind or insulting nature. A recent change, however, is making it more fashionable to send gifts, large or small, on this memorable day, instead of printed verses and emblematic designs, often rubbishy or inelegant. Up to the beginning of the reign of Queen Victoria, the gentleman who addressed a valentine to a lady added to the printed matter, if any, some verses of his own composing, often queer enough,



I dare say. The earliest valentine of which we have any account, is attributed to Charles, Duke of Orleans, in the fourteenth century. Before there was a regular way of conveying letters by post, of course valentines had to be sent by special messengers.

Misson, writing many years since, records an ancient custom on this festival, which he found both in England and Scotland. This is his account: 'An equal number of maids and young men come together, each writes their true or some feigned name upon separate billets, which they roll up, and draw by way of lots, the maids taking the men's billets, and the men the maids', so that each of the young men lights upon a girl that each calls his valentine, and each of the girls upon a young man that she calls hers. By this means, each has two valentines, but the man holds faster to the valentine he draws, than to the one by whom he is drawn.' The last observation is amusing, and probably true. seems also, that the younger people in a household were allowed early in the morning to catch some senior relative or a friend of the family, uttering the salutation, 'Good morrow, Valentine,' and expecting then a present, which would seldom be refused.

Originally, as is evident from the above quotation, St. Valentine's Day had different customs from our modern ones; and the association of two persons as valentines might mean nothing beyond friendship, or it might arise from accident. Quaint old Pepys mentions in 'his diary' that his wife was his valentine one February, and he seems to have regretted that he had to spend money in obtaining a present for her. Choosing valentines as a sport was practised amongst the English gentry in 1476, if not sooner than that; perhaps it came at first from the Romans. And there was also the belief in some places, that the 'valentine' of each person was the first they met of the other sex when they rose in the morning. Chaucer, and several of the early English poets, speak of the country notion that the birds chose their mates upon this day, and many have admired Herrick's lines, which are beautiful in their way, if a trifle fantastic:—

'All the air is his diocese,
And all the chirping choristers
And other birds are his parishioners;
He marries every year
The lyric lark and the grave, whispering dove;
The sparrow that neglects his life for love;
The household bird with the red stomacher;
He makes the blackbird speed as soon
As doth the goldfinch or the halcyon.'

A few English villages kept up until recently the following odd custom. Upon Valentine's Day the lads

^{*} Kingfisher.

had a bush or bunch of evergreen, to which they set fire with shouts, and called it an 'ivy-girl.' The maidens went through a similar performance, and had their bonfire of a 'holly-boy.' This seems to have been originally a kind of incantation, since it is alluded to by two classic poets, and, connected with the (supposed) sacred plant the laurel. Then the country girls used to go out, when the middle of February was mild enough to entice the early spring flowers to bloom, and gathering such posies as they could, they bound them with ribbon, hanging them from the ceiling in honour of St. Valentine.





F this day it must be said, as of other holy-days observed by our forefathers, that some of the doings connected with it were not quite in character with the sacredness of the festival. In fact, the people in early English times had odd notions about right and wrong, and their priests did not do much to enlighten Sad to state, some of the old, bad customs of Shrovetide were kept up in country villages until the reign of George III., if not later, when there was less excuse for ignorance. What could be more disgraceful, as an instance of wanton cruelty, than the custom of threshing a fat hen? On Shrove Tuesday, this poor creature was brought out and tied to the back of a man, who also wore some small tinkling bells; a number of other men, who were blindfolded, chased up and down the one who carried the hen, having boughs in their hands. This game took place in a court or enclosure, and the fun (?) consisted in their failing to hit the hen, and in their striking each other as they ran wildly about. When the hen was killed, it was cooked directly, and eaten before the pancakes and fritters.

'Confession Tuesday' was another name given to

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this day, for 'shrove,' or 'shrive,' signifies confession, and in preparation for Lent, the priests required every one to attend church and confess; after absolution was obtained, it was the practice of the people to spend the holiday in amusements of a far from wholesome kind. though they might not all be as barbarous as the henthreshing. Some of the games were harmless. Fitz-Stephen, who wrote in the thirteenth century, says that Shrove Tuesday was a special day with schoolboys, who went out in parties to play at 'hand-ball.' This seems to have been a very simple game, the ball was tossed from player to player, and those who dropped or failed to catch it had to pay a forfeit. Other writers tell us the boys also played at 'goff,' or 'bandy-ball,' a game so-called from the 'bandy,' or bent stick which each player had. In that case, it is likely the boys divided into parties of two or four, and the object was to drive the ball into certain holes in the ground, and he who missed fewest holes became the victor. The first and last holes were sometimes a mile or two apart. It is noticeable that the name 'goff' was more generally given to this game in later times, when it was fashionable at the court. There were various games besides these that date from early times, such as 'pall-mall,' a game something like croquet, in which a ball was driven through iron arches, with mallets. Foot-ball is of doubtful date, yet it is an old game. Trap-ball is another old favourite, traceable to the reigns of the first or second Edwards of England, and we learn from an antique picture, that although the trap, into which the ball was put to be struck, was in form like that now in use, it was raised upon a sort of leg, which saved the batsman's stooping.

Cock-fighting was at one time so popular, that it was not thought wrong to encourage school-boys to rear fowls for this purpose, which were brought to the fight on Shrove Tuesday. We will not dwell on the particulars of this horrible sport, but may remark that several attempts were made by the kings to put down cock-fighting, as an 'idle and unlawful pastime,' but the people would not be obedient, and in later days some of our monarchs unfortunately patronized the sport; viz., Henry VIII. and James I. So it happened that at Whitehall there was a house which was called the King's Cockpit, and this, in the period of the great Civil War, was for awhile the abode of Oliver Cromwell. Throwing at cocks may be regarded as still more inhuman than cock-fighting, the birds being placed in earthen jars, and thrown at with sticks, much as cocoanuts are on holidays by modern excursionists. Duck-hunting with dogs was another cruel game, though the pond chosen for the purpose was usually large enough to give the duck a good chance of escape by swimming and diving. A place near London,

known as the 'Dog and Duck Fields,' Lambeth took its name from this sport.

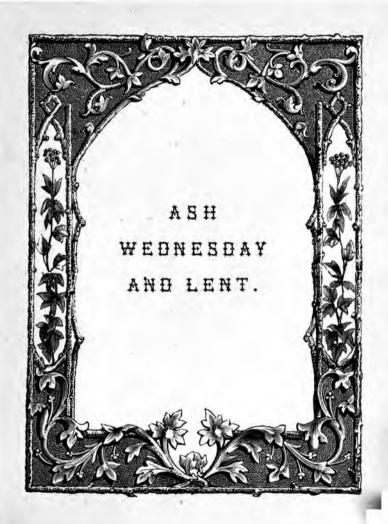
Brand, the antiquary, says that in several country towns the boys went from street to street singing these lines, just before Shrove Tuesday:—

'Shrove-tide is nigh at hand,
And I am come a shroving,
Pray, dame, something;
An apple or a dumpling,
Or a piece of "truckle"-cheese
Of your own making,
Or a piece of pancake.'

If, as sometimes happened, they were met with sharp refusals, the lads flung mud, or even stones, at windows, in those places where there was no danger of their being seized by parish constables. A traveller in one part of Cornwall, states that there the boys threw stones before they asked for gifts, and the people in the houses sometimes took the defensive, the result being a skirmish of more or less violence. A jingling match was a Shrovetide amusement of a harmless kind. A circle being enclosed with ropes, the players, being not more than ten or twelve, went inside it, having their eyes covered with handkerchiefs. The jingler, however, was not blindfolded, but he had to avoid the pursuit of the rest, and, to enable them to follow him, he had either a small bell in each hand, which he

shook, or else bells fastened to his knees. He was not allowed to go beyond the rope boundary, and a fixed time was given for the game, twenty minutes, or perhaps half-an-hour. If at the end of that, or before, as it might happen, some one of the players caught the jingler, he received the prize; but if the jingler, by his quickness and dexterity, had given them all the slip, then the prize was bestowed upon him. It was, in fact, a sort of open-air blind man's buff.





Chirstian Church it appears to have been the custom to observe Lent, but the observance of Ash Wednesday belongs to a later period. The priests, on the morning of the day, blessed ashes, and portions of these were laid upon the foreheads of the worshippers, to remind them, so the monkish writers tell us, that they were dust, and must some day return to dust—a truth we do well to remember, though such a way of keeping it in memory is not at all desirable. Some of the consecrated ashes' would be taken home by many of the people, and carefully kept. The superstitious even attributed to them the power of healing a variety of complaints.

At first, it is stated that the Lent season was only thirty-six days, beginning then on the Quadragesima Sunday; afterwards four days were added to make up the forty. It is probable that Lent was instituted in remembrance of our Lord's forty days' sojourn in the wilderness. We do know that many Christians of the Dark Ages did during the Lent season inflict upon themselves severe penances and sufferings, to which

the usual Lent fast is quite a mild observance, thinking, in their ignorance and fear, that by ill-treating their bodies they might obtain God's blessing. The first record of the observance of Lent in England is in A.D. 640, Grambert, the king of Mercia, requiring his subjects to be obedient to the priests' orders. The season of abstinence, however, has never been a favour ite one with the English people. They did, to some degree, observe the fast, but the flogging, often enjoined upon wouldbe penitents, was still more disagreeable. There were, no doubt, then as now, some whose penances were as unreal as that of a pilgrim who when ordered to march a certain number of miles with peas in his shoes, prudently boiled them before he started!

One who has written upon the Spring Festivals of the Olden Time brings clearly before us the feelings with which our ancestors generally regarded Lent. It was, indeed, 'the black spot in the calendar, the dark overhanging cloud in the sky, so that "lenten fare," and "as long as Lent," became proverbs, applied to whatever was deplorably mean, or intolerably wearisome. When black Lent, with its veiled shrines, extinguished tapers, and silenced bells arrived, our meatloving ancestors, with looks of mingled sorrow and anger, put aside beef and fat mutton, and laid in stores of herrings and dried stock-fish, wherewith to mortify themselves. Punishments were inflicted by the magis-

trates in numerous instances, where persons were proved to have eaten meat or sold it, especially during Passion Week, the height of the fast. The penalties were fines or a short imprisonment, perhaps even the pillory, moreover, the unfortunate individuals had to suffer the Church's censure; yet most authors agree that there was always much meat eaten in Lent. The people had a warning of the approach of Shrovetide and Lent when they heard, the last Epiphany Sunday, the words, 'Let us bless the Lord, Alleluia;' for the Romish missal did not allow 'Alleluia' to be said again till 'Holy Saturday' returned.

But as a set-off against the severities of Lent, the priests took care to allow or encourage some special amusements. One of these was the Troy game, a great favourite with the young Londoners of six hundred or seven hundred years ago, and which occupied them on the Sunday afternoons in Lent, when the players and the spectators went out in crowds to the open fields north of London. Those who took part in the game were all mounted on horseback, and there was a singular mixture of combatants, for in addition to the youthful citizens, the young nobles and knights came to make trial of their skill, and to show off their steeds. At one time, the whole troop of horsemen went through a variety of exercises, at another, they separated into two or more divisions engaging in sham fights, the

weapons employed being headless lances, or according to one author, hollow canes. Shields were also carried by all the combatants, as a means of defence. The game was really a kind of tournament without armour.

Those very singular and decidedly irreverent performances called 'miracle plays,' or 'mysteries,' were, at one period of English history, occasionally produced during Lent. They appear to have been acted in the open air upon a raised stage or mound of earth, about which the spectators stood in a circle. The plays, which usually represented some event in Scripture history, were sometimes carried on from day to day. We read of one, at which Richard II. was present, that lasted three days, and another, in which was taken up the whole of Old Testament history, and part of the New, actually took eight days to go through. About these we may say more, in connection with those holidays that were more particularly associated with them; viz., Whitsuntide and Corpus Christi Day.

The three Ember Days follow the first Sunday in Lent; they were instituted, so the old histories tell us, that the people might then assemble to seek a blessing upon the ground and the crops at the season when the influences of spring were beginning to be felt. The principle was of course a right one, whatever we may think of the Church observances which the Papists joined to these days. The fourth Sunday in Lent had

in some places the name of Care or Carling Sunday, and the village boys went about singing, 'Care Sunday, care away,' and asking for a present. Then the day was also called 'Mothering Sunday,' because of a belief that on this particular Sunday each person should go to his or her 'mother church,' that is, the church where they had been baptized. Nor were they to come empty-handed, but bring a gift, large or small, according to their circumstances. Afterwards it seems that 'Mothering Sunday' got to have another meaning, and it was a custom for apprentices and servants to visit their parents on this day, taking them a cake or some trifling present.

The monks, many of whom had a liking for gardening employments, were in some of the monasteries very busy during Lent in attending to those early greens and herbs which were rare in England until the sixteenth century, and which were nursed with care in sheltered corners of their gardens. It was one of their achievements, by forcing (how they managed we do not know) to produce dishes of green peas at Easter.



TITH joy did our forefathers greet the arrival of this day, for it gave a gleam of brightness to the gloom of Lent; the strict fast, indeed, was still to be observed, but in most churches they had a cheerful procession, in which others besides the clergy took part. This was a celebration meant to keep up the remembrance of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The custom of gathering palms on, or before Palm Sunday, has been followed by Protestants as well as Roman Catholics. Writing in the reign of George III. an author tells us how he noticed the children of London City going together in parties on the day before Palm Sunday either to the woods of Highgate, or to Battersea and Camberwell in Surrey, to obtain twigs and boughs of willow and sallow, which have for many a century been used in our islands as a substitute for the eastern palm. Why these trees were selected is uncertain; perhaps they were not taken with any special meaning, but were sought out because the bloom happened to be conspicuous at a season when few plants and trees have leaves or flowers. The priests allowed the laity as well as the clergy to have places in the



CHRIST'S MALEA INTO INDUSTRIEM.

procession of palms, thus endeavouring to make the people feel that they also were part of the Church. The procession probably walked not only within the church, but the priests and their attendants also marched palm in hand around the sacred building. An ancient MS. tells its readers that every Christian man ought not to forget to bear palm upon this Sunday, as a sign, or 'tokenynge thatte he hath foughten wythe ye feinde, and gotten ye victorye.'

A strange custom might have been witnessed som years ago in the church of Caistor, Lincolnshire, on Palm Sunday. During the reading of the first lesson at morning service, the 'deputy' appointed came to the church porch, bearing an ash whip about ten feet in length, with a thong of white leather. given three loud cracks with this at the door, he then stepped inside, and twisted the thong round the whiphandle, putting afterwards some strips of mountain ash about both. Next he took a purse with twentyfour silver pennies, and fastened that to the handle of the whip, and waited in front of the reading desk till the second lesson commenced. When the reading of that began, the deputy waved the purse and whip over the clergyman's head for a moment. and then held them above him until the end of the lesson! This curious ceremony was necessary to preserve the right to certain lands in the parish.

Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday, though not kept as a general holy-day, had a remarkable custom of its own, one yet retained in the Romish Church. On this day, his 'holiness' the Pope washes, or makes a pretence of washing, the feet of twelve beggars, and then dries them with a damask napkin, to prove that 'Christ's Vicar' is as humble as his Master. In the olden time, many did the same in our own country, for the act was esteemed a valuable penance, and kings, princes, nobles, and bishops washed the feet of poor men or women, bestowing upon them a small gift. Thus originated the queen's 'Maundy money,' which is still bestowed upon this day in the Chapel Royal, Whitehall, the number of the receivers being the same as the years of the sovereign's age. Some derive the word 'Maundy,' from the Saxon mand or maund, meaning a basket, because it is supposed that the gifts used to be brought in baskets. There is a record of the performance of this ceremony by Queen Elizabeth at Greenwich, when she was thirty-nine years old. 'The feet of the poor persons were first washed by the yeomen of the laundry with warm water and sweet herbs, afterwards by the sub-almoner, and lastly by the queen herself; the person who washed making each time a cross on the pauper's foot above the toes, and then kissing it.' Thirty-nine ladies or gentlewomen attended upon the

Queen. James II., our last king of the house of Stuart, was also the last British king who washed feet on Maundy Thursday.

Another old name given to the day was Shere Thursday, because upon it the country folks 'did shere and trim their hedges, and make them to look honest for Easter.'





WE cannot discover that this remarkable anniversary has been called by the above name in any country except England. A not uncommon name for it in other lands is 'Holy Friday.' Concerning the keeping of this day as a day of religious service there are many differences of opinion amongst Christians which we need not discuss. The great event it commemorates should not be far from our thoughts on any day of the year, since all our hopes in this world and the next rest upon the atoning work accomplished by Christ Jesus. But evangelical Christians are quite agreed in condemning those superstitious ceremonies which the Romish Church has from age to age celebrated on Good Friday.

At many of the old churches in London, it was formerly the custom to erect a small building outside, which was presumed to represent Christ's sepulchre. Within this the host or consecrated wafer was placed, and persons, who were supposed to represent the soldiers of the Roman guard, were appointed to watch from the Friday evening to the Sunday morning. Throughout Passion Week, most of the usual employ-

ments of our ancestors were stopped, so that persons might attend church frequently; and those would have been esteemed heathers or heretics who refused to do this on Good Friday, when the houses were deserted by every one except the young children. In fact, 'the whole population flocked to their particular churches, and remained prostrate on the pavement, while the very long tracts, lessons, and Gospels were read, and while the nine prayers for the Holy Church, the Pope, the Hierarchy, the King, the Catechumens, the blessings of Providence, for "heretics and schismatics," for the "perfidious Jews," and for "pagans" were recited. Next the priest, who on this day in the plainest vestments stood at the high altar, uncovering the cross, exclaimed, "Behold the wood of the cross!" thrice the choir and people responding, "Come, let us adore!" And then, during the time of the alternate chanting of that singular part of the service, termed "The Reproaches," the ceremony of creeping to the cross was gone through—a form never to be omitted, not even by the monarch; and moving along on their hands and knees, they three times devoutly kissed the feet.' A rigid fast was maintained at this season; some, indeed, of the specially devout boasted of tasting no food from the time of Christ's death until the morn of His resurrection. Others, in their blind zeal, would scourge or flog themselve sin church, returning to their

homes with garments stained by blood that flowed from the wounds their hands had made, foolishly thinking that thus the tortures of a guilty conscience might be relieved. Are Roman Catholics only so deluded? We fear not, the idea is deep down in the nature of all, that somehow by our doing or our sufferings, we may work out a salvation for ourselves. other ancient service of this day is called by the Latin word tenebræ, meaning darkness, and in this the circumstances of the crucifixion are commemorated. A triangular candlestick is placed in a prominent position in the church, with fourteen yellow candles arranged in two sevens, and one white candle above them all. The solitary one represents our Lord, the fourteen, the eleven apostles and the women. Fourteen psalms are sung, and after each one of the yellow candles is put out, the white candle is also removed, and hidden under the altar. This denotes the flight of all who followed our Lord, while the concealment of the last candle signifies that Christ is laid in the tomb out of view. At this point a noise was made by beating the desks with the hands, and the floor with the feet, to represent the earthquake and its terrible accompanying sounds

Since there is a certain connection between Easter and the Jewish festival of the Passover, it is possible that the 'hot-cross buns,' which have been eaten on Good Friday from very distant times, have some relation to the unleavened or passover cake. The sign of the cross made upon these buns gave them a sacredness, which led some persons to hoard them, supposing they had mystical powers. 'The Easter eggs' may have been borrowed by the early Christians from the Jews, for they placed eggs on the table during the Passover, it is thought, as a symbol of the world which is the abode of the human race, or as representing eternity. At Newcastle, it is said these eggs were called pasque, that is 'paschal eggs.' It was usual to dye them red or blue. In France the custom of presenting Easter eggs is very general, the eggs being not only coloured, but also gilt, or ornamented with curious designs.

On the Saturday before Easter, called 'Holy Saturday,' or 'Easter Even,' it was once usual to extinguish the fires in the church, and then rekindle them, with flints that had been blessed for this purpose. The paschal taper was also blessed; this was occasionally made in the shape of a serpent, and was of large size. We read that the one which was prepared for Westminster Abbey in 1557 weighed as much as three hundred pounds. At dusk, this was solemnly lit amidst the burning of incense, the organ at the same time giving forth its music. After the epistle was read, the long-denied 'Alleluia' was again heard,

but the fast was maintained until the dawn of the day. One monkish writer, Robert of Lincoln, is careful to impress upon the minds of the people the importance of attending church on Holy Saturday. It is a day, he says, when the 'feyndes' (fiends) are full of mischief, and likely to raise storms, excite quarrels amongst neighbours, set fire to houses, and do similar damage; so God should be implored to put forth His power and check them.





THE fact is undeniable that Easter, the Christian festival, has taken its name from that of an old goddess of the Saxons, Eostre, one of the proofs of the compromises that the priests made with the pagan superstitions of our forefathers. Early in the morning of Easter Sunday, it was the custom to go out into the fields, before the sun rose, the people having a steadfast belief that if that was watched at dawn, it would be seen to dance for joy. Of course, when gazed at fixedly for some minutes, the rays might seem to quiver, or dance; others went abroad to visit the cattlefolds, since it was reported that about the dawn of day the cattle prostrated themselves on their knees, doing reverence to the Redeemer of our race and the Lord of the creation. The usage of decking churches and houses with such flowers as are to be found at this season is of very ancient date. We may assume that it was done to typify the resurrection; for as the earth, during winter, hides from view the fair buds and blossoms of spring, so does the grave cover those precious relics of our departed, which shall one day reappear in new life and beauty.

At most churches of importance, besides a display of flowers and budding leaves, they placed in front of the altar on Easter Day what was called a 'paschal.' These 'paschals' were of varied shapes and designs, but they consisted of puppets or figures, meant to represent the resurrection of Christ. Some of them cost the parishes a good deal of money; the figures being carefully constructed and adorned with paint and gilding. Other paschals were of rough make, but served to amuse or astonish the people. All being prepared, we are told, at early morn, 'the congregation assembled in garments of the brightest colours, and bearing bunches of spring flowers, and four priests, one in an alb, entered the church. He in the alb stole softly to the paschal, a palm branch in his hand, and sat down beside it: then the three others, with censers in their hands, slowly approached, as if looking for something. As soon as they came near, he began singing, 'Whom seek ye?' to which the three replied in chorus, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' He then answered, 'He is not here, but risen!' At these words the others turned towards the choir, and sang, 'Alleluia, the Lord is risen!' Then the first, as though calling them back, said. 'Come, see the place where the Lord was laid!' and removing the covering from the paschal, exhibited this piece of workmanship to the congregation. The people, delighted that black Lent was past, and the joyful season of Paschal-tide had arrived, pressed eagerly to the flower-decked altar.' At the high altar of each cathedral, the bishop appeared arrayed in purple silk and an alb adorned with needlework, and uttered the words, 'I am risen, and yet am with you, Alleluia!' Yet Easter was often observed in anything but a Christlike spirit. Almost down to the time of the Reformation, the Jews were exposed to insults and ill-treatment at this season. Those who ventured abroad were buffeted or pelted by the mob; if they remained within, stones were flung at their doors and windows.

Morning service over, the congregations hastened home to dinner, and the after part of Easter Sunday was spent in amusements, and usually the Monday and Tuesday succeeding. We cannot but smile to read that many persons crammed themselves with bacon. eating of it as much as they could to show their abhorence of Judaism! Jousts and tournaments were much patronised by the upper class, because at the season of Easter the usual coolness of the weather enabled the knights and their esquires to bear caparisons which were painful or oppressive during the heat of summer. Whatever might be the games and sports, the people. were expected to end them at the time of the curfew bell (about five), evening entertainments out of doors not being then in fashion, though there may have been revelling until the small hours of the morning in



LIVIING.

mansions and castles. To the young Londoners, few sports were more attractive than the game of waterquintain, which drew them in numbers to the banks of the Thames. A post was fixed in the middle of the stream, having a shield hung against it; a young man approached with a lance, being rowed towards his mark in a small boat by some of his friends. he managed to strike the shield and maintain his position, he was declared to be successful; but if he missed his stroke, or lost his balance, he had to yield. to another champion. From an old engraving in the Bodleian Library it would seem that lads sometimes ran with a wooden lance at a butt or tub of water placed on a post; their object being to knock off the butt at a blow, and not wet themselves. Then there was also 'running at the ring,' a game which is supposed to have been introduced from Italy. The ring was suspended from a straight bar of wood fastened in a post, and those who took part in this game rode at full speed towards the post, and endeavoured to carry off the ring on the point of a lance.

'Lifting,' or 'heaving,' was an old and not very decorous sport, popular amongst the villagers in many parts of England. On Easter Monday the women and girls assembled in small parties, and seizing any persons of the other sex they chanced to meet, they lifted them three times in the air, whether they liked it or

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not. A demand was also usually made for money. The next day, Easter Tuesday, the men had their opportunity, and in turn they lifted the women. Although this rough sport was yearly forbidden by the magistrates during the reign of George III., it was not given up in the north of England until recent times.

Another pastime of the Londoners has also been pursued in the remembrance of many now living. It has been well described by Hood in one of his humorous poems. A stag was brought out on Easter Monday, and hunted through Epping Forest by a noisy mob of riders in all kinds of vehicles, or on horses and donkeys, attended by others on foot. We may even now see both young and old amuse themselves by rolling down Greenwich Hill on Easter Monday, a custom that is thought to have its origin in some holiday observances at Greenwich during the reign of 'bluff King Hal.'

If we are ever apt to fancy the old times were better than the present, the remembrance of such a custom as that of 'Church-ales' may help us to form a different opinion. There were in some parishes, what were called either 'Easter-ales,' or 'Whitsun-ales,' according to the week in which they were kept. It was an ingenious, but very improper mode of getting money for church repairs, or other expenses. The churchwardens, some weeks before the holidays came,

bought a certain quantity of malt, from which they brewed strong ale. From the accounts given by various writers, it appears that this ale was sometimes actually sold in the church; but if not, it was sold in a house near, to bring profit to the church; and during the selling of it persons were asked for contributions besides for the church's benefit.

Hoke, or Hock Day, was a holiday observed in the first week after Easter: the principal ceremony or performance of the day was the blocking a road by means of ropes, passengers being refused leave to go past, until they had paid a small fee. Some authors say that persons going along were bound with ropes in a playful way by the Hockers, men or women. It has been thought that Hocking arose out of a celebration of the death of Hardicanute, in 1041, which freed England from the Danish yoke, but this is merely a guess.





A NTIQUARIANS seem to be inclined to believe that the Romans led our British ancestors to keep the 1st of May as a festival, these visitors from Italy having brought with them those floral sports or games which were customary amongst the pagans of Europe in honour of the supposed deities of the fields and The Papacy saw no objection to these, and although the priests did not connect any religious service with the May Day doings, it is plain they were encouraged, or at any rate winked at, by 'mother Church.' The maypoles, indeed, were in many places permanent objects, and remained stuck up year after year, serving sometimes as landmarks. Mention is often made of the great maypole of Cornhill, in London City, which actually gave a name to the church that happened to be near it, St. Andrew Undershaft. The Strand pole was one of the last of the London maypoles that survived. It is referred to by many authors, and stood, though not in very good condition. until the year 1718, when it was carried off to Sir Richard Child's park at Wanstead, to form part of the supports of a big telescope!



BAISING THE MAYPOLE.

For several days towards the end of April the young people would be very busily engaged in preparing the decorations for the maypoles, and also for the persons who were to figure in the dance around them. Flowers were gathered, and branches cut down to form a variety of wreaths and posies, while the handy maidens were at work, preparing showy drapery, or contriving other adornments.

There was another curious custom, which lasted at least till the middle of the sixteenth century, connected with the bringing home of wild flowers from the fields and woods. A young man who admired a maiden, placed on the morning of May Day, either a garland of flowers, or a branch of the hawthorn or may-bush against her door. Some maidens would receive several such proofs of regard; others, doubtless, had their doors quite unadorned, and those damsels would probably not greet May with very sweet looks. But the decoration of houses with the fresh green leaves of spring appears to have been a common practice, both in town and village, for Herrick tells some one to observe,

'How each field turns a street, each street a park, Made green and trimmed with trees.'

Bourne's story of the May Day doings is given in these words: 'The juvenile part of both sexes,' says he, 'are wont to rise on the morning of May Day a little after midnight, and walk to some neighbouring wood, accompanied with music and blowing of horns, where they break down branches from the trees, and adorn themselves with nosegays and crowns of flowers. When this is done they return with their booty homewards, about the rising of the sun, and make their doors and windows to triumph with their flowery spoils, and the after-part of the day is chiefly spent in dancing round a tall pole, which is called a maypole.'

Dancing, however, was not the only amusement: for there were also jousts on horseback, displays of skill in archery and at ball, with numerous other games, and in the evening, occasionally, bonfires were lit up. By comparing the accounts that several authors have left us of the May Day doings, we form some idea of the importance of this holiday in bygone times. One of the singularities of the May festivities was the motley group of individuals dressed up to represent different characters. After the death of that noted archer of Sherwood Forest, Robin Hood, it was usual to have a man dressed in 'Lincoln green,' to represent him; for his skill with the bow, and his bold exploits, made him a favourite hero with the people. He was accompanied by 'Little John,' also in green, and as tall a fellow as could be got, and by 'Friar Tuck,' in monastic garb. 'Maid Marian' was next in the party, dressed in white, and decked with flowers, having sometimes a long veil. Then there was the fool, a usual attendant upon any group of a sportive kind amongst our ancestors. He wore a long-eared hood, and frequently a many-coloured jerkin. A piper, perhaps two or more musicians, must be added to the party, for to the music that was produced would caper two queer figures, called the hobby-horse and the dragon. Now and then they pretended to fight each other, much to the joy of the lookers-on. These figures were made of pasteboard, or some such material, with men concealed inside, and according to the old writers they represented St. George, the patron Saint of England, and the dragon he is said to have killed, to deliver a fair princess from deadly peril.

When it ceased to be the custom to have a Robin Hood and this odd group of attendants at the maypole, it was still usual to choose a lord and lady of the May, who held the position of the outlaw-archer and his Maid Marian at the festivities. The poet laureate, Tennyson, has introduced this circumstance in a favourite poem of his, upon 'the Queen of the May.' We may add here, that of course the 'Jack in the Green,' which in modern times has been carried about by the chimney-sweeps, accompanied by a girl in short petticoats, and a clown, is a relic of the old 'Robin Hood' procession.

The archery games on May Day, were, in the principal towns, under the management of the mayor and

aldermen; in smaller towns and villages, the nobility or gentry of the neighbourhood took the lead. Prizes were awarded to the successful archers; and during that period of English history when the long bow was a favourite weapon in war, it was naturally thought important to encourage the practice of shooting. Strength was requisite if a young man wished to be proficient—for it was not easy to pull a bow, when the arrow to be shot was a full yard in length, -a sharp eye, judgment as to distance, above all, says old Roger Ascham, courage, 'for whoever shoots with trepidation, is sure to shoot badly.' It was required of the archer to put himself in a graceful attitude. The distance of the mark from the bowman was varied from two hundred to four hundred vards. A story is told by one old author, about a strong-armed bowman who could send an arrow nearly half-a-mile on a calm day. It is stated that sometimes the archers fired at a butt. which probably was like the butt or target of our modern practice, and sometimes at a hazel wand, which the arrow was expected to split. When, as was now and then the case, the prize was a butt of wine, it is said that this butt was placed as a mark, and those who competed endeavoured to cleave the bung. probably arose the odd inn sign of the 'Bolt in Tun,' for one sort of arrows had the name of 'bolts.' Besides this shooting at a fixed mark, there was also, on May Day, sport with bow and arrow in the open country or in the woods; parties of archers roamed forth, shooting at any objects they happened to see. Henry VIII., in his early years of kingship, went out thus, attended by his guards and yeomen in white 'sarcenet and satyn,' and many of the people followed to see him shoot, for he was very skilful with the bow, and fond of most old English pastimes. That he should have also been clever in making songs and ballads, and in playing on the flute and 'recorder' is rather surprising.

A few words must be given to the morris-dancers, for they were so far distinct from the May Day personages already mentioned, that they came out on public holidays at other times of the year, though now attendant on Robin Hood and Little John. The morrisdancers also occasionally performed at a bridal, in the hope of receiving a present from the persons assembled. According to one authority, the dance these men went through was called the 'Morisco' or 'Moorish' dance, because it was copied from the Moors, and had African However, others declare that the old peculiarities. morris-dance was nothing more than the fool's dance commonly known in England from the times of the Anglo-Saxons. We shall not attempt to decide where the wise men differ. It is proved by old figures that the dancers were bright coloured garters, and bells about their legs, or, perhaps all over them, for we read of thirty or forty bells being attached to one man. They were shoes, and from an entry in a parishregister, it seems that in one year, at Kingston-on-Thames (date, sixteenth century), sevenpence a pair was paid for these. It appears that dresses for the morris-dancers were bought by the parish, as there are also entries of tinsel and silver paper and fustian, in this and other parishes. Sometimes a woman made one of the party, and a description of a female morrisdancer exists in an old author, who tells us about her golden crown (of tinsel?), her blue surcost with white cuffs, and her red stomacher with yellow lace in crossbars! Usually one of the party had the 'cockscomb' hood of a fool, and he carried the 'bauble,' that is, a bladder having stones in it, which he rattled from time to time. A musician accompanied the morris-dancers, who played the pipe and tabor, the latter being a small kind of drum.

Though the maypoles were specially connected with the holiday games of May Day, it may be surmised that there were festive doings around them on other fine days during the summer months. But in the reign of Elizabeth a change passed over the English people, as the Reformation extended its influence over their minds, and out-door sports had less attention given to them; archery, too, became of less importance, owing to the use of fire-arms. King James

attempted to revive the interest in bull-baiting, cudgelplaying, morris-dancing, and the like, even recommending them as occupations for Sunday afternoons in his notorious Book of Sports. The Puritans, in their books, and by their sermons, condemned the May Day amusements, and, we may be sure, had good reason for so doing, since sports that had been at one time comparatively innocent proved at last the sources of profanity, intemperance, and other vices. And so it happened that in spite of the royal proclamation, commanding that the maypole sports should be kept up, the people for the most part chose rather to gather round their Ministers on the Lord's Day, to listen to the words of eternal life. Then followed fines and imprisonments, and in the next reign Cavalier and Puritan came into deadly conflict, religious freedom being one of the chief causes of the quarrel. It is true, as one writer has remarked, that the beginning of this battle, before swords were unsheathed, took place at the foot of the maypole.





REAT is the difference in habit and feeling between us, in this year 1881, and our ancestors of three or four centuries ago; yet the language of some of the old poets, when they speak concerning the sweet flowers of spring and summer, moves our hearts as it did those who first read their lines. We rejoice with them over the vellow daffodils and 'cuckoo-buds,' the fair lilies, the blue violet and eyebright, and the 'pied daisy;' but perhaps in other days the pleasure felt in these simple wild flowers was greater, because garden flowers were scarce. So. as we have noticed, the young folks at and after Easter took delight in decorating the churches with flowers; but what began innocently came to have a superstitious colouring. By-and-by, the ornamentation of churches was regulated on a plan suggested by the priests, who varied the flowers to suit certain saints' days or other holy days in the calendar.

As the 'Pentecost-tide' was, in the estimation of many of the people, a still greater festival than Easter, preparations for it were made diligently as the season advanced. Withered flowers were thrown away, to

be replaced by a fresh gathering. In some churches. too, the walls were enlivened by a display of tapestry wrought by the fair fingers of titled dames and their attendant maidens. First came the Feast of the Ascension. Though the forms of matins and the two vespers were duly gone through, when every versicle and prayer was closed with the Alleluia, the larger part of this holy-day was given to feasting and merriment, not always of an innocent kind. In the rough lines of an old poet, Barnaby George, an account is to be found of one odd Ascension Day custom, when an image of our Lord was drawn up to the church roof with cries of joy, and another, to represent Satan, flung down on the pavement, to be attacked by the boys, and broken in pieces by their fists or sticks. It was also a part of the ceremony of this day to have a distribution of cakes after the evening service, accompanying the 'antiphon,' by which the gift of the Holy Spirit was sought, in words, often alas! uttered carelessly. On the next Sunday the priests gave an intimation, scarcely needful, that the feast of Whitsuntide was approaching.

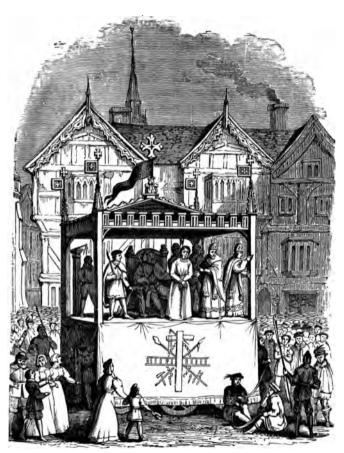
Before the dawn, the bells pealing from tower and turret woke our ancestors on the morn of Whit Sunday, and, no doubt, sometimes sent them to their prayers in their own chambers; for it was believed by many persons that a petition to God was sure of an answer, if offered just as the sun dawned upon the earth at the commencement of the Pentecost Feast. Unquestionably Whit Sunday or White Sunday took its name from the circumstance that on this day the 'catechumens' appeared at the entrance of the choir clad in their white robes, chanting at intervals, while (even if they were grown up) their 'sponsors' stood around to utter promises for them. During the early years of English history, the priests used much exertion to gather a number of these catechumens; both bribes and threats helped to make converts, since 'the strong arm of power dragged many an unwilling heathen to the waters of baptism, and the sign of the cross was impressed on many a shuddering brow.' In Norman times there stood at the font the frightened Jew, the half-pagan Saxon or Dane, or perhaps the swarthy native of the East, each seemingly prepared to renounce, in the quaint old phrase, 'all the devil's works, and all the devil's words.' After the fifteenth century, when it had become unusual to have the catechumens thus mustered, the clergy resorted to other devices to attract or surprise the people. Lambarde tells us he saw, at St. Paul's Church, the coming of the Holy Ghost set forth by the liberation of a white pigeon, whilst a censer of incense was drawn up and down between the roof and the pavement.

The service in church concluded, all hastened to the

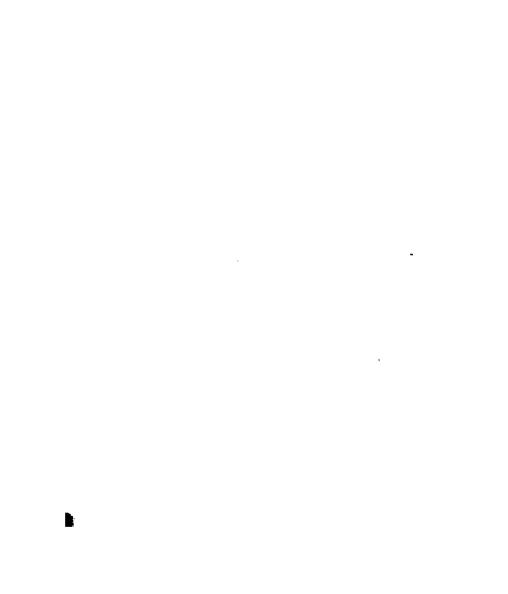
well-spread tables to be seen in every hall and palace, for the nobles on this grand holy-day held that they were bound to feast all comers, so soldier, serving-man, peasant, and vagrant tramped in together to the rushstrewn rooms. Much as they loved a feast, however, our forefathers could not eat from morning to night; so on each day, throughout the Whitsuntide festival, there were special amusements, which attracted not only the men, but the women and children also. the days of chivalry, the clash of shields and spears was to be heard, or the twang of the bowstrings, for tournaments enabled the knights and squires to show what they could do, if need be, when fighting against the active Frenchman or the fierce Saracen. read that horse-races were deemed by the Normans a very proper Whitsuntide amusement, and one author says that the course run was usually three miles, and the reward of the winner forty pounds of 'redde golde.'

But of far more importance, especially during the century or two before the Reformation, were the old miracle-plays, or mysteries, about which much has been written. They have been severely condemned, not without reason, because they grotesquely represented Bible narratives, and led to various evils. Yet we must not judge the customs of the past by the taste of an age like the present, and the people are not so much to be blamed as are the priests who encouraged these perversions of Scripture. Still the clergy were not all of one mind about these plays; for William of Wykeham, in 1384, wrote severe censures on the priests who lent sacred vestments for these performances. One Pope, it is recorded, did what he could to promote the miracle-plays (which somehow brought money into the Church coffers, we may be sure) by granting a thousand days of pardon to those who regularly attended the annual exhibitions of them, so that such persons had an indulgence for every day of the year, and six hundred and thirty-five more! From the specimens that are left, we find that the matter of these plays was for the most part rubbish, now and then ridiculous, as mixing up Bible truths with pagan or Jewish legends.

The ancient city of Chester was long famed for the grandeur of its miracle-plays. And in London we find a memorial of them, for Clerkenwell was originally named from the clerks' well, near which was an open space, where the parish clerks acted plays which took up a whole day. There were also plays that occupied several days, such as the one by which was shown the whole of the life of Christ, from His birth to His ascension. Miracle-plays appear to have been generally performed in the open air, with music at intervals. It is supposed that short addresses of a moral kind were sometimes given. It is noted that in London



CHESTER MYSTERY PLAYS.



and in other large towns, various crafts of workmen undertook to act particular plays; thus the water-carriers exhibited the scenes of the deluge, and the shipwrights built Noah's ark. A play showing the miraculous draught of fishes was suitable for the fishmongers, certainly, but we may wonder why the drapers acted the 'fall of Satan!'

Easter-ales have already been mentioned; I should add that some towns and villages had Whitsun-ales, of the same nature, at which much misconduct frequently happened. But, passing on, we observe that the sightseers had a new spectacle on Trinity Sunday, which follows Whitsuntide. This was in preparation for Corpus Christi Day, a day devoted to the glorification of one of the most dangerous errors of Rome. In strange contrast to the summer flowers around the walls of the church, the largest wax candles blazed beside the altar, on which was piled the church plate. The whole clerical staff, with numerous attendants. were engaged in the service. Then on the Thursday. a procession was formed, such as may still be seen in Catholic countries. Along the crowded streets, carpeted with green boughs and rushes, the consecrated wafer was borne along by the priests, while the choristers sang a hymn, in which it was declared that the faithful were, as dutiful children, to take for Gospel all that their mother Church said was true.

The Coventry Mysteries, established a hundred years after those of Chester, were very famous. The Grey Friars acted conspicuously on *Corpus Christi* Day in that town, their mystery or play being in rhyme.





TATHAT is Midsummer Day to most people now? Only the turning-point of one of the quarters, when house rent is due, and bills have to be made out or paid. It was different in the olden time. forefathers the day had a religious meaning. It was kept joyously too, rather than gloomily, since it held in remembrance the birth of a saint; for it was St. John the Baptist's festival, though a fast preceded it, as was frequently the case with the Romish 'feasts.' This, however, was not all, for as commencing the second half of the year, folks formerly considered that Midsummer was nearly equal in importance to Christmas, the grand festival of winter. The two days, moreover, had some observances in common. A wheel was, by the Pagans, used as a symbol of the Yule or Christmas-tide, as showing the rolling round of the season, the arrival of the severities of winter, with the hard frosts of Christmas. The revolving wheel also signified the advent of summer, with its heat and long sunny days. One custom, we are told, was to carry a wheel to the top of a mountain or hill, surround its spokes with straw; and then having set it alight, the

party hurled it down with shouts, believing that as the wheel rolled towards the bottom it carried away their ill-luck.

Another noteworthy fact is that bonfires were made on the eve of St. John, that is, the evening before Midsummer Day; and we know that bonfires were formerly lit at Christmas. The pagans of early history had their summer bonfires, which were in honour of Baal, and they danced about these, or even went through them-not through the actual flames but along a path between the smouldering ashes. In the Bible such an eastern practice is referred to, and it may have come to the west long before the Romans visited our island. One gentleman, writing from Ireland only a century ago, has told us that in his time he saw the country ablaze with midsummer fires. and the superstitious made their children, and even their cattle, to pass through them. Other writers have been very positive that our old bonfires were not pagan. but only meant to remind the people that John was 'a burning and a shining light.' In England, amongst some of the villagers, it was a custom to make three bonfires together, one of bones and no wood, one of wood and no bones, and one more of bones and wood mixed; perhaps hinting at the legend that the bones of John the Baptist were burned by the orders of Julian the Apostate. Hence it has been said that

bonfires once meant bone-fires, because they were made up of refuse bones. No, reply others; they were bonfires because they were good fires, excellent for the purpose of driving off witches and evil spirits! A third meaning of the term has been suggested; the people who made the fires, especially the boys, got the materials by begging, so perhaps they were boon-fires.

Bonfires, however, at the midsummer season, were not confined to country places, for we read of them in the history of London. Many were lit in the fields near to the city, and the young people grouped themselves around these, swinging garlands which were composed chiefly of two plants, called motherwort and vervain. The vervain was a wild flower, much esteemed by the Druids, as well as by the Romans, and their fancy gave to it the powers of warding off infectious diseases, or preventing the influence of an 'evil eye.' It is difficult to say why the vervain was associated with the Eve of St. John.

Stow tells us that the citizens of London used to decorate the fronts of their houses and their doors with boughs and flowers. Amongst these he specifies the birch, long fennel, St. John's wort, white lilies, and orpine. They were selected as symbols of rejoicing, and were worn on the festival of the birth of the Baptist, since he was the forerunner of our Lord Jesus Christ. But some of these plants had special

meanings, the birch, for example. I don't know whether, in the times of which I am writing, the boys and girls had midsummer holidays; if they had, the birch decorations might have served as a hint to the juveniles to behave themselves properly. For an old author says, 'The birch is useful for the punishment of children, both at home and at school, since it hath an admirable effect upon them when they are out of order, so that some call it "makepeace." Fennel, that strong-smelling, and not generally admired plant, was much loved by our ancestors, and ladies wore it in their hair, while it was believed that the seeds and leaves boiled with milk, and taken occasionally, prevented persons from growing old. The white lily gathered at this season was doubtless the water-lily, which once grew plentifully on the surface of many ponds in the neighbourhood of London. Down to the time of the Stuarts, there was on this day a grand civic procession of the 'Midsummer watch,' which kings, more than once, condescended to come and witness. King Henry VIII. went to see it, standing near Bow Church, when the guard, or watch, consisting of nearly two thousand men, 'with morions and breastplates of bright steel,' marched past him, accompanied by the Lord Mayor, the Sheriffs, and Gog and Magog-or at least the images of these guardians of London City. Before the watch went minstrels and morris-dancers, while

merry peals sounded from the church towers. After the procession was over, the worthy citizens kept open house in the streets (to speak in Irish fashion); that is to say, they had tables carried out of their houses, and loaded with an abundance of provision, to which they invited the by-passers.

Several curious superstitions of ancient date belong to Midsummer Eve: thus it was believed, that if the maidens fasted on this eye and afterwards set out the kitchen table with bread, cheese, and ale, then at midnight the persons to whom they were to be married would come in and drink the beer. Boyet, an old author, tells, and he seems foolish enough to credit, a story about two servant girls, whose experiment ended in the sight of ghostly figures that walked in, tossed off the beer, and walked out with a bow. Many people did seriously believe stories like this, and sometimes frightened themselves into the belief that they saw apparitions or ghosts. The custom of sowing hemp, which, in Scotland was a Hallow E'en ceremony, appears in England to have belonged to the eve of St. John. It was fancied that the future husband or wife came as a shadowy figure behind the sower, in the attitude of pulling or cutting hemp. Persons would also go out to gather cabbage or coleworts of a particular sort, and by the taste of the heart of the cabbage they supposed that they could learn

the temper of those they were some day to marry. Damsels who already had admirers sought out, for an experiment, the plant called orpine, or 'midsummer man.' The hopeful maiden gathered two sprays, and put them above her bed. These were eagerly watched as they faded; did they bend towards each other, it was a good sign; if they drooped apart, it was unfavourable. A maker of verses has alluded to the tokens sought from the orpine—

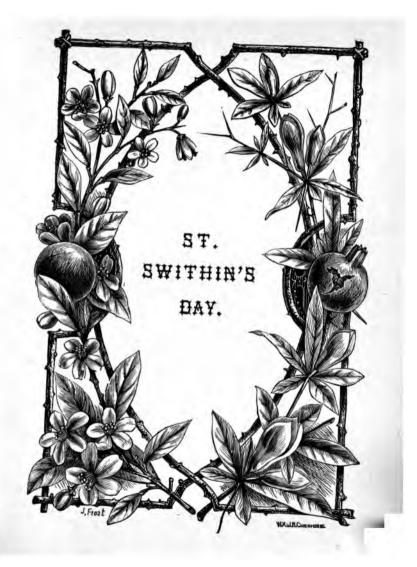
'The rustic maid invokes her swain, And hails, to pensive damsels dear, This eve, though direst of the year; Oft on the plant she casts her eye, That spoke her true-love's secret sigh, Or else, alas! too plainly told, Her true-love's faithless heart was cold.'

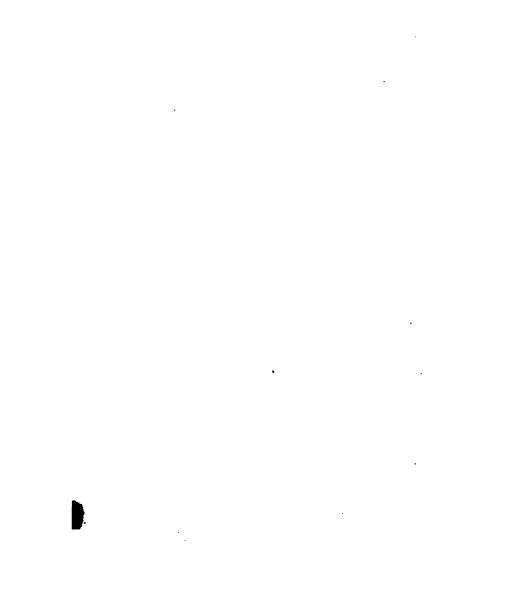
These last words look like a contradiction in terms; yet it is not so, for 'true-love' is not simply a compound of the words 'true and love,' but is derived from an old word, which meant one who had made a promise or engagement. Therefore a 'true-love' might be also a false love, in this sense.

Few things were more bitterly complained of by our forefathers than the severe forest laws which the early Norman kings required both Saxons and Normans to obey. These forbade the favourite amusement of hunting to all but a small number of persons, and it was

even dangerous to be found wandering about in the 'merry greenwood.' Under the Plantagenets, freedom was restored to the people, and upon Midsummer Day began the hunting of the hart and the buck, which lasted till 'Holy Rood,' September 14th. The hind and doe were hunted from Holy Rood to Candlemas; the fox and the wolf, only from Christmas to Lady Day.







THIS saint's day does not appear to have been kept in any part of England as a holiday, but it is of sufficient importance in English history to have a brief notice here. Doubtless, in Roman Catholic times, some people addressed fervent prayers to this saint when his anniversary came round, for it was commonly believed that he had an influence upon the weather during forty days. There are those who still think that as is Saint Swithin's Day, fair or foul, so will be the character of the weather through the period above mentioned. But then it may be a question to be settled, what is really the day from which we are to expect the good saint's interference. Almanacks now put Saint Swithin down on July 15th; this is, however, reckoning by the 'new style,' which pushed the saint twelve days forward, and by the 'old style' his rightful day is July 3rd. Does Saint Swithin reckon by the old style or by the new? Yet there may once have been some cause for this tradition about Saint Swithin. Centuries ago, when our country was badly drained, or not drained at all, there were ofttimes tremendous floods, ruinous to property, and fatal to life; and in consequence of a disaster of this kind, a story may have been attached to Saint Swithin's Day. This would be likely to be altered as the years went on, and then there grew the legend that he had forty days' influence over the clouds. It is a curious fact that in several parishes we have old entries of money paid to the clergy on Saint Swithin's; thus, at Kingston-upon-Thames, every householder had formerly to pay 'Saint Swithin's pence,' perhaps a contribution to a fund raised for the relief of sufferers by heavy rains or floods.

But we must give the history of Saint Swithin, as it is recorded by the monkish chroniclers. They say that this saint, called by some 'Weeping Saint Swithin,' died in 865, he being then Bishop of Win-The Pope, for reasons that satisfied himself, canonized the bishop, who had before he died told his brethren that he wished to be buried in the open ground, and not within the sacred building. He was duly buried, and would soon have been forgotten, when the news came from Rome that he was made Saint Swithin. Now, said the clergy, it is certainly not fit he should lie in the churchyard; so they fixed a day for a grand funeral procession, and the disinterment of his body, so that it might be laid in the choir. It rained in torrents on that day, and the next day, and the following day; day after day train poured down, until the clergy were convinced the saint wished his

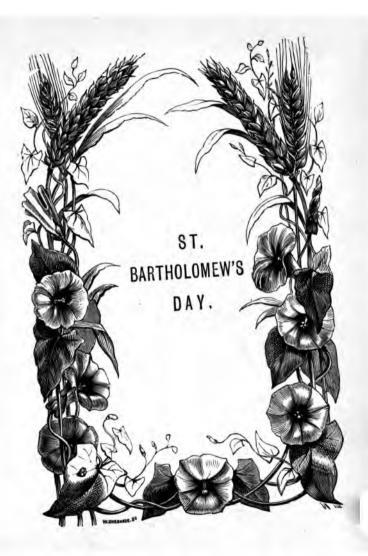
body to be left where it had been first placed. This legend implies that the saint was rather an obstinate man, yet he was not disobliging, if this story, told about him in clumsy rhymes, is to be credited:—

'A woman having broke her eggs
By stumbling at another's legs,
For which she made a woeful cry,
Saint Swithin chanced for to come by,
Who made them all as sound, or more
Than ever that they were before.'

It is said that a chapel was built to the saint's memory, near his grave, at which miracles were supposed to be wrought. In some rural districts, should it rain on this anniversary, the folks declare that Saint Swithin is christening the apples, and there are several old sayings which contain praise of July rains, because they help to fill the ears of corn. So that opinions may differ as to the effects of wet seasons or dry ones, and it is our comfort to know that our weather, like all other things which concern us, be they great or small, is in the hands of One, infinitely above saint or angel, 'too wise to err, too good to be unkind.'

Two days later in the year, July 17th, was observed as Saint Kenelm's Day, which used to be kept as a holiday by the Anglo-Saxons, but under the Norman kings and priests it was gradually forgotten. Till the

beginning of this century, Saint Kenelm's Day was observed in a few villages, and at Clent, in Shropshire, the people had a singular custom connected with it, called 'crabbing the parson.' On the Sunday after Saint Kenelm's Day the villagers claimed the right of waylaying the clergyman on his way to church, and pelting him with crabs or crab's shells! As this frequently ended in a skirmish, in which sticks and stones were used by the crowd, the practice was at length stopped. Why the clergyman was thus 'crabbed,' is explained by this story. At a solitary house near the church, many centuries ago, the parson or priest used to take a meal between the morning and afternoon service. One Sunday, a priest who had had rather a short dinner, took two dumplings out of the pot, belonging to the woman of the house, and hid them in the sleeves of his surplice to eat by-and-by. commenced the service, but presently a dumpling rolled out, and fell on the clerk below. Though he was surprised, he took no notice, until a second dumpling struck him, when he was so enraged that he jumped up and pelted the priest with some crabs he had in his pocket, and which he was about to take home to prepare some medicine for his horse from their claws.



ST. Bartholomew was, from an early period, commemorated on the 24th of August. It is supposed that he was flayed alive, by the order of a cruel pagan king. The older painters had a fancy for odd subjects, and several of them have depicted the saint in the act of suffering this barbarous punishment. Some fragments of the skin of this saint are said to be preserved amongst the relics hoarded in various Romish shrines. According to a legend, St. Bartholomew, nearly eleven hundred years after his execution, condescended to pay a visit to England. Rahere, master of the ceremonies at the court, had been ill, and as was then usual, he had made a vow that he would found a hospital if he got better. He did recover, and as he was thinking over his hospital scheme, St. Bartholomew appeared (so runs the story) in a vision of the night, and told Rahere he would help in this scheme. When the king gave for this purpose a site in Smithfield, the builders grumbled, because the ground was so marshy, and the work stopped. Then the saint suggested to Rahere a mode of getting a number of volunteers, and the hospital was speedily built. The first prior was Rahere himself, who endowed it with a small estate, which is now increased to a considerable sum.

This anniversary is of special interest for several In consequence of the horrible massacre reasons. which was carried out in France upon 'Black Bartholomew,' a great number of refugees crossed the Channel, and many of them settled in London, where they exercised a notable and beneficial influence on various trades and manufactures. Then in 1662, we, of Britain, had also a fatal Bartholomew's Day, when the Act of Uniformity came into operation, and nearly two thousand Ministers left the Church of England, because they would not consent to write or act a lie. They were ordered to conform, or go out just before their yearly tithes were due, and so many were suddenly left destitute. Very nobly, the London citizens raised a handsome sum for these good men.

Coming to a more pleasant subject, we are reminded of the great fair in London, which was long connected with this holiday. This was for centuries the great Cloth Fair of England, and drew vast numbers of people to the metropolis. In the reign of Henry II., the time of the fair was limited to three days; but this was at last lengthened to a fortnight, and the fair became a nuisance, so that in 1708 the law shortened it to three days again. The clothiers used to put up their booths and stalls in the church-

yard of the priory of West Smithfield, a spot now quite built over. By degrees the fair became of a mixed nature, and was resorted to, not only by the regular sellers of cloth and other goods, but by strolling players and hawkers of various commodities, especially eatables and drinkables.

During many years, this fair was formally opened by the Lord Mayor, and the citizens turned out in numbers to see the procession. A sceptre, crown, and cap was carried before him, for he represented the Sovereign; the sheriffs and aldermen also attended, in their robes of office. The proclamation having been read, the Mayor drank what was then known by the name of a 'cool tankard' (composed of wine, nutmeg, and sugar) with the Governor of Newgate. By this custom, in 1688, was accidentally caused the death of Sir John Shorter, in a singular way. As he was lowering the tankard, he allowed the lid to fall suddenly; the noise startled his horse, which reared, and flung him to the ground. Sir John died the next day from the effects of this fall. The ceremony of the opening being over, the Lord Mayor and his party rode off to Clerkenwell, where wrestling and various games went on, and occasionally dramatic performances. The wrestling was in some respects peculiar, for those who wrestled were mounted on the backs of other persons, and the object of the struggle

was to try who could throw his adversary from his human steed. The victors received small prizes in money. One year a very serious riot occurred at the Fair, because the servant of the prior of St. John's, having been defeated, wanted to have another trial. The Mayor refused to allow this, so the disappointed man and his friends raised a tumult, in the course of which several citizens were killed.

Some means were taken, however, to prevent or settle disputes arising during St. Bartholomew's Fair, for a 'Court of Pie Powder,' as it was styled, sat in the fair, day after day, to which offenders were brought, and received sentences, which were speedily put into execution. The trials also went on briskly, since the witnesses were at hand, and the judge was seldom long in deciding each case. Sometimes the punishment was the stocks, or a flogging administered there and then, or if a man owed money that he could not pay, the judge would order him to be stripped of his clothes, and sold these by auction on the spot. Pickpockets and cutpurses did a good (or bad) business. and one trick of theirs was at least ingenious; they would bargain with a costermonger to throw down a basket of fruit, and while everybody ran to pick it up, they had a capital chance, if the city marshals were not too near, for these did their best to keep order.

We hear sometimes about the fondness of a modern

Londoner for eating and drinking whenever he has a holiday; but really it does not appear that he is given to such reckless self-indulgence as were the citizens of the former time. In this fair an enormous quantity of refreshments were sold. One part was called 'Pasty Nook' or 'Pie Corner,' occupied mostly by sellers of pork-pies, which were served up hot. To us, however, hot pork-pies in August are not suggestive of agreeable sensations. A visitor to the fair during the eighteenth century has described what he partook of, a bill of fare which might well horrify a professor of dietetics! He ate ham and veal, washed down with toddy and purl, then had a cooler of oysters, finishing with sausages and hot gingerbread! An ox was generally roasted whole, and another excitement of the fair was the cruel turning out a number of wild rabbits, to be scrambled for by the boys. At the booths there were amusements to suit the tastes of different visitors, and the charges for admission varied from a penny to a shilling, or even eighteenpence. In the Tudor period. there were frequently plays representing Scripture scenes, and as late as the reign of Queen Anne we find an account of a show in which were exhibited the creation and Noah's flood. Of course, there was the still famous Punch, with his wife Judy and his dog Toby; also giants, dwarfs, mermaids, wild beasts, and real or pretended wonders from all parts of the world.



A S if it were not enough to dedicate saints' days to those of human race, the fathers of the Romish Church dedicated the 29th of September to 'St. Michael and all angels.' It is not easy to see why they needed a mass, even if the Popish notions about that were true, for how could it benefit creatures who have never been guilty of sin? But perhaps this mass was merely meant to show man's readiness to render service to the angels as a return for their favour and protection. Through many centuries the people believed in guardian or 'tutelar' angels; they even asserted that different parts of the human body had special angels to look after them. It appears that both saints and angels were imported into the Romish Calendar from the old pagan mythology, with only a change of name. Possibly, Michael, commander of the angelic hosts, had had given him something of the character of Hercules of Greece, said to be a slaver of dragons and monsters.

Bourne tells us that the custom in many towns of choosing councillors or aldermen at Michaelmas is connected with the belief in angelic guardians. These

civic functionaries or officials are, or ought to be, keepers of the peace; they have the interests of their fellow-townsmen under their charge, and so, by an ancient usage, they were elected on the day appropriated to our angelic defenders. Not many years ago, at some of the Michaelmas elections in the country, scenes of disorder took place which were winked at by the authorities. Several towns have been mentioned, where the time for riotous disturbance was actually fixed, and one hour allowed, notice being given by the tolling of a bell in the market-place. This was called the 'lawless hour,' and I am afraid that sometimes the roughs did not leave off their wild doings quite punctually! A favourite form of the affray was a general flinging about of cabbage-stalks! Instead of showing suitable honour to the newly chosen officials, the people often pelted them with apples or rotten eggs.

Amongst the quaint customs of London City is one connected with Michaelmas. The dignitaries of the City attend the Court of Exchequer, where after a formal summons has been given to the tenants of a Shropshire manor to appear, the senior alderman below the chair steps forward and chops a stick, to signify that it is the duty of the tenants to supply the lord of that manor with wood. Also, in order to represent the owners of an old forge, which was once situate

between the City and Westminster, an officer, in the presence of the Cursitor Baron, produces six horseshoes and sixty-one hobnails, which he counts over.

To some persons Michaelmas Day is chiefly interesting, because it is still usual then to eat goose. Goose clubs are common at the Christmas season, but those who are judges of poultry tell us that this bird is in its prime during the autumn. Now the custom of bribing people by a present is very old, if not quite 'as old as the hills,' and therefore, years ago, tenants used each quarter to present something to their landlords: fish, it is said, at Lady Day, chickens at midsummer, at Michaelmas a goose, and perhaps at Christmas some bacon or ham. There is a very pretty story told in some books about the origin of the 'Michaelmas goose; 'I suspect, however, we must not accept it as true. We are told that Queen Bess was dining on this day in the house of Sir Neville Humfreville, near Tilbury, a goose being the principal dish, when the news arrived suddenly of the entire defeat of the Spanish Armada. She is said in her joy at the rescue of England to have declared that she would always eat goose on the anniversary of the day when the news came, and her loyal subjects followed her illustrious example. A local ballad has been quoted in support of this account, a part of which runs thus:

'Where are these Spaniards?
That make so great a boast, O!
They shall eat the grey goose feathers,
And we will eat the roast, O!'

But the fact is that the Armada was scattered on the 20th of July, and a thanksgiving sermon was preached at Paul's Cross in the middle of August; so though news travelled slowly in those days, the event must have been known all over the land before September. Besides, Michaelmas geese are mentioned in documents of the reign of Edward IV., and it appears that amongst the privileges belonging to the Ministers of some parishes was the right of 'goosegrass;' i.e., the parson could claim grass for his geese free of charge. The superstition that if you eat goose at Michaelmas you will not want money all the year round is of some antiquity; a poet of the last century has put it in the following question and answer:

- 'Q. My wife would persuade me (as I am a sinner)
 To have a fat goose on St. Michael for dinner;
 And then all the year round, I pray you would mind it,
 I shall not want money—oh! grant I may find it,'
- 'A. I think that you're so far from having the more,
 That the price of the goose you have less than before.'

Norfolk men are occasionally called 'geese' in joke, as that county is famous for these fowls, and a

tavern sign not uncommon there is the 'Goose and Gridiron.' It is curious that the usual cry by which geese are brought together is 'Willie! willie!' One author thinks that this is a play upon the word 'wily,' and another supposes the allusion is to the letter Y, since in flight a goose resembles that letter inverted. There cannot be a doubt that the goose, as a bird, does not deserve the name for folly that it has got, for it is capable of much affection and sagacity.

In some country places folks quote an old saying, that upon Michaelmas Day Satan puts his foot on the blackberries, therefore the fruit is not to be eaten after that period. A very singular and rough custom once existed in some Hertfordshire villages. The young men assembled and chose a captain, who led them hither and thither, over fields, across ditches, and through hedges, in the style of the schoolboys' game, 'follow my leader.' If the party met a couple walking together while they were out on this excursion, several of the young men took them off the ground by their arms, and swung or bumped them against each other.





THE world will not soon forget the observances of Hallow E'en, seeing that the Scottish poet Burns has so fully described them in a well-known poem. But it has been often supposed that the customs of this memorable evening, the last in October, belong to Scotland only. We are now assured that this is a mistake; from various places throughout England there are or were old observances connected with the eve of All Saints, which had for their intent the discovery of the future in respect to courtship or marriage. Hallow E'en does not appear to have been an English name for this day, which had in some parts a totally different one, 'Nutcrack Night.' This points us to what was once a leading part of the evening's programme. It may be suggested that the persons who could try such ridiculous experiments must have been almost as 'crackit' as the nuts, since it is certain that what became in later times a mere matter of fun was at one time seriously believed in.

The Romans, so the old histories say, introduced to Britain the custom of burning nuts as a kind of sacrifice to the goddess Pomona, whose supposed task was



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to look after the autumn fruit. How from this there originated the lover's lottery we do not know. A number of nuts were named, or had initials roughly scratched upon them, and were then placed on the hearth. If the nuts representing a maiden and her intended consumed quietly away, until only the ashes were left, it was a good sign, telling that they would have a happy life. Should there be much popping as the nuts burnt, it meant that they would have frequent quarrels; but if the nuts fairly flew apart from each other, they thought that the courtship was not to end in a marriage. Burns has depicted this burning of nuts:

'The auld gudewife's weel hoorded nuts
Are round an' round divided,
An' monie lads' an' lassies' fates
Are there that night decided:
Some kindle, couthie, side by side,
An' burn thegither trimly;
Some start awa' wi' saucy pride,
An' jump out owre the chimlee
Fu' high that night.'

Eating an apple before a looking-glass, in the hope that the future husband would then appear in ghostly form, peeping over the shoulder of the anxious damsel, was a custom amongst Scotch lassies which does not seem to have had its counterpart in England. Here, however, games were sometimes played on this even-

HALLOW E'EN; OR, NUTCRACK NIGHT. 123

- ing, in which apples figured. A slip of wood was made to rotate on a fixed point; at one end a lighted candle was placed, and at the other end an apple. The experimenter stood in front of it, and while the wood was spinning round, he attempted to remove the apple with his mouth: of course if he was clumsy, he ran the risk of being burnt by the candle. It is not stated that the maidens tried their skill at this game. For the juveniles there was a bobbing for apples set afloat in a tub, a sort of frolic rather than a divination. But there was a divination by apple parings, that is yet resorted to in a few country places. For an unknown reason, this mode of seeking to discover the future husband's name was put into practice on the 28th of October, the festival of St. Simon and St. Jude. The inquisitive damsel, taking up her position in the middle of a room, repeated these rhymes:-

'St. Simon and St. Jude,
On you I intrude,
By this paring I hope to discover;
Without any delay,
Do tell me this day
The first letter of my own true lover.'

Having sung or said this inelegant versicle, she turned round three times and flung an apple paring over her left shoulder. This paring was then carefully examined as it lay on the floor, fancy suggesting some letter of the alphabet which it resembled in . shape. There were other curious ways of discovering the name of a husband or admirer, and doubtless some of these were tried upon Nutcrack Night in the olden time. Let us take two as illustrations, very unlike each other. The hearth was strewn evenly with white ashes, and a good sized snail was brought in, and put amongst them. As the creature wandered about, it would leave tracks on the hearth, and these were examined, in order to discover what initials thev represented. Hot bacon fat offered another experiment, and this was poured slowly into a vessel of cold water; and as it hardened in cooling, its shapes were supposed to resemble letters of the alphabet. Dipping the sleeve of the sark, shirt, or under garment was practised both north and south of the Tweed. account of it is as follows, given in prose: 'You go out, one or more, for this is a social spell, to a south running spring or rivulet, where three lairds' lands meet, and dip your left shirt sleeve. Go to bed in sight of a fire, and hang your wet sleeve before it to dry. Lie awake, and some time near midnight the exact figure of the grand object in question will come. and turn the sleeve as if to dry the other side of it.' In England, the maiden (for in this country only females appear to have tried the spell) went out silently to some spring, dipped her sleeve, and kept silence

while she watched for the result, probably dropping off to sleep just at the witching hour of night, when she ought to have been on the watch! No doubt, in many such cases the imagination conjured up apparitions, perhaps the cause of much terror afterwards. Sinning ignorantly, it may be, in making such superstitious experiments, persons met with unexpected punishment for trying to pry into hidden things.

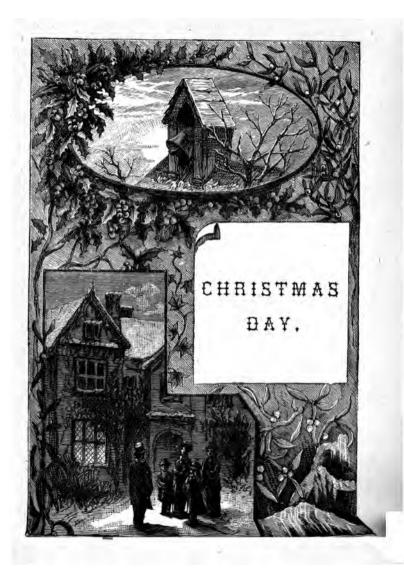
The old Scotch ceremony, we remark further, of pulling a stock or plant of kale, had its comical side. The folks, young or middle-aged, went into the garden with closed eyes, and pulling a plant each, returned to the house. The root was examined first; if a lump of earth remained on it, that indicated to the person who held it that he or she would marry some one with a fortune. The second thing was to take note of the size, shape, and general appearance of the stock, from which conjectures were made regarding the looks and figure of the future husband or wife. So much for the outside. The third thing done was tasting the custock, or heart of the stem, which was supposed to indicate what sort of temper the individual would have. whether sweet or bitter. There still remained a fourth experiment with the stocks of the kale, which were arranged over the door of the house in a particular order. From the initials of the Christian names of those who chanced to call it was guessed what

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would be the first letters of the names of the expected partners. In England, this kale gathering was not made of much importance, and the custom of pulling kale was also observed at an earlier date; for old authors speak of some peculiar charm being associated with the midsummer kale.

Sowing hemp-seed stands out conspicuously as a custom belonging both to Scotland and England. A person of either sex had to steal out of the house unnoticed, and sow the seed; sometimes the apparition was called upon to harrow the hemp, and sometimes to pull or draw it. Burns tells a laughable story about the alarm of a young man who, when thus engaged, heard a strange noise behind him, and roared so loudly that the whole party rushed out to see what was the matter. But they soon discovered that he had only been followed up the garden by grumphie, the old sow.

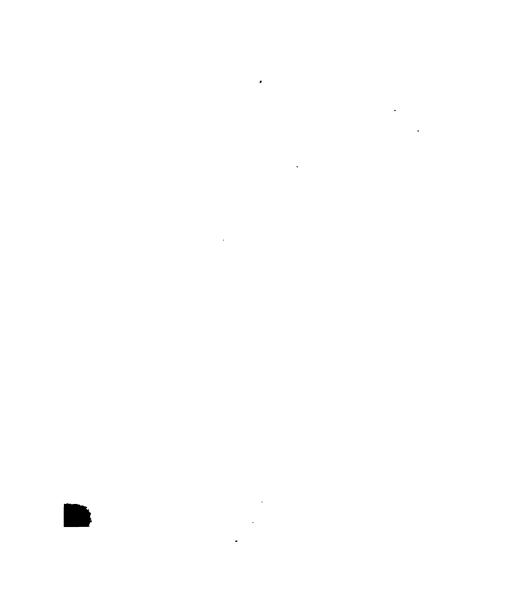




CHRISTMAS, that season of festivity, connected with early recollection of holidays and happiness, of plum-pudding and parties, of mince pies and misletoe -and also possibly with those of physic that had to be swallowed after an over-indulgence in good thingsis now but a shadow of Christmas in the olden time. We do not think that this is to be regretted: the Christmas observances in which our forefathers delighted were, many of them, associated with the religion of the Church of Rome, through a long period the foe to Britain's advancement in liberty and truth. If we break up Christmas into two words, we at once perceive how the festival originated; it was Christ's mass, because the special mass celebrated was in remembrance of the advent of our Lord. It is thought, however, that Christmas observances, like other festivities of the olden time, had something pagan about them. Some say the Romans introduced several of the rites of their Saturnalia; and some also say that into the Christian festival has been brought a part of the worship of the northern God Thor; and there cannot be a doubt that the misletoe, such a favourite in Christmas decorations



STIRRING THE CHRIS LIAS PUDDING.



(though forbidden to be placed in churches) was a plant held sacred by the Druids.

The poets, always in love with what is venerable, have not been slow in commending the observances of Christmas. One ballad-maker dwells on the generosity which formerly prevailed when the well-to-do people 'summoned their poor neighbours by bagpipe and by drum,' and gave them an abundance of good cheer. Sir Walter Scott, though since the Reformation Scotchmen have not much favoured this 'relic of the Papacy,' has praised old Christmas:

'England was merry England when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'T was Christmas broached the mightiest ale;
'T was Christmas told the merriest tale;
And Christmas pastimes oft would cheer
The poor man's heart throughout the year.'

Christmas carols are of great antiquity; it is possible that some of them have been sung in England ever since Christianity has been known on these shores. There were indeed older songs of this season, we are told, by which our pagan forefathers honoured Yule, an old deity, whose name remains yet; for Yule, at first the title of a heathen god, was afterwards one of the titles given to the Christian festival. Hence, the Yule log, or clog (as they called it in the northern districts),—a special log placed solemnly on the fire on

the eve of the holiday, and the ashes of which were frequently preserved until the next year. belief attributed various virtues of a medicinal nature to the ashes of the Yule or Christmas log. But several days, or even weeks, before Christmas, the carol-singers told of its approach by their quaint melodies, sung both by day and by night. Many of these carols have been lost in the course of time; and others have evidently been much altered, because they were handed down only by word of mouth from age to age. We must remember that these carols, or Christmas ballads, were of two distinct kinds. There were many religious, having reference to Christ and the Virgin Mary, to the angels and the shepherds, which either told or alluded to the history of the nativity of our Lord. Others sung were rather comic than serious, and intended to encourage kindliness or mirth during the Christmas holidays. The Normans, when they came into England, brought carols with them from France, and more were written in the time of the Middle Ages. We quote some lines from one of these, probably composed by a monk, which will recall a favourite modern hymn, 'Jerusalem the golden:'-

'O fair, O fair Jerusalem!
When shall I come to thee?
When shall our griefs be at an end?
Thy joys, when shall we see?



The fields were green as green might be When from His heavenly seat The Lord our God He watered us With heavenly dew most sweet.'

Or to take a fragment from a carol of a very different class, here are a few lines of one that was sung by the maidens while decorating the hall or chambers with evergreens, for even the sleeping apartments were thus made gay at Christmas. This song contrasts the holly and the ivy; ivy was like the yew, a funeral plant.

'Let holly stand within the hall, fair to behold; Let ivy stand without door, full sorely cold. Holly and his merry men deftly dance and sing; Ivy and her maidens are always sorrowing. Ivy hath an ague; she shaketh with the cold: So may all those be who do with ivy hold.'

To the American poet Longfellow, even the church bells, as they chime, seem to sound forth carols; and he writes:—

'I hear the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And mild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men.'

Besides singing carols, the youths and maidens used, in the olden time, to go round from house to house

with the wassail-bowl, calling out, 'Largess! largess!' and expecting a gift, large or small, which was seldom refused. The name of this bowl is supposed to have come from the Anglo-Saxon salutation, Waes hail, that is, 'May you be in health;' but the healthfulness of its contents is doubtful, for it generally contained old ale, flavoured with spices and sugar. When it was no longer the custom to carry the wassail-bowl out of doors, it was still usual to bring this upon the table at the Christmas family party, and every person was asked to drink from it. Our worthy ancestors, it is noticeable, had a liking for large drinking vessels, to which our modern glasses are mere dwarfs. According to the Romish custom of celebrating the eve before an important festival in the Calendar, the eve of Christmas was observed with almost as much ceremony as was the day itself. At vespers, the priest, standing by the altar. now adorned with evergreens, and lit with Christmas candles, sang, 'Sound the trumpet in Zion, for the day of the Lord is at hand. Alleluia!' The congregation hastened home joyfully, to light up Christmas candles in their houses; implements of work were laid aside. festive garments put on, and a holiday commenced which at one time lasted nearly a fortnight, that is, until after Epiphany. There was a service held at midnight, which was attended both by the young and the old: for, as a commentator on Christmas customs



CHRISTMAS SCENES.



remarks, 'none feared to go abroad that night, and even the most timid maiden would boldly enter the churchyard, for on Christmas Eye superstition declared that the magician's wand was powerless, and the witch might utter her incantations in vain: no Will o' the Wisp was permitted to disturb the traveller, and unquiet spirits rested one night in peace.' There was also a superstition, which one has scarcely the heart to call 'foolish,' that all nature rejoiced on this night; the roses put forth blossoms which vanished before morning, and even cows and stags bent the knee in reverence. The bells rang out as the people entered the churches, and the choir with gladsome melody joined the clergy in the choral of Gloria in excelsis! But the congregation was only dismissed for a short period, since at daybreak the second mass was sung, when the priest chanted, 'Unto us a Child is born,' &c.

After Protestantism became the established religion of Britain, Christmas Eve customs, like those of Christmas Day, underwent changes, but many remained unaltered, some even to this date in several places. In the north of England, specially in Yorkshire, the eve of Christmas is a grand night with the young folks. It is the fashion in some villages for the children to troop about the streets, making the night noisy with their drums and trumpets, if they can get them, or lacking such instruments they will march

along with the clatter of fire-irons. At home, a variety of games occupy the evening, long associated with the Christmas season, and the big Christmas pie is cut for supper, containing a whole goose or perhaps two. The cottagers still prepare on this eve the timehonoured furmety, or frumity, a dish composed of wheat pounded with a mallet, and then boiled in milk. nutmeg or other flavouring being added. Ramsay, one of Scotia's poets, mentions the 'bra' goosepie' as one of the Christmas luxuries. Amongst the special games of Christmas Eve was that of blindman's buff (also called hoodman blind, because one of the party was blindfolded with his hood, while the rest buffeted him with their hoods); also hot cockles, hunt the slipper, snapdragon, the cat and the mouse, and others never played at now.

But what shall we say of the feasting that went on when Christmas Day actually arrived? Most of us have heard or read some stories of the fare under which the tables groaned and of the variety of dishes in which our ancestors indulged. It has been thought that they were more gluttonous than the people of our day; I am not sure of this, probably they ate much more at a meal than we do, but then they had fewer meals. We may notice a few items of the entertainment usually provided in the houses of the gentry. The boar's head was first in the array of dishes,

brought to table on a dish of gold or silver, if possible, and heralded by the blowing of trumpets, or perhaps by the singing of a carol such as this, partly Latin, partly English:

'The boar's head in hand bring I,
With garland gay and rosemary,
I pray you all sing merrily,
Qui estis in convivio:
The boar's head, I understand,
Is the chief service of the land;
Look, wherever it be found,
Servite cum cantico.'

Another poet has given a description of this grand dish:

'Sweet rosemary and bays around it spread; His foaming tusks with a large pippin graced, Or 'midst those thundering spears an orange placed; Sauce, like himself, offensive to his foes, The roguish mustard, dangerous to the nose.'

It is most likely the boar's head was chosen as the centre dish as an insult to the Jews, whose dislike to swine's flesh was similarly noticed by the eating of bacon at Easter. But in so doing our ancestors seem to have forgotten that our Lord was Himself a Jew, as also many of the first disciples. Then there was the peacock, prepared for the table in a peculiar fashion. The feathers were taken off with the skin; after the bird had been roasted it was sewn up again in the

plumage, and the beak gilded, or even the whole body was covered with gold leaf. Capons and a variety of poultry were brought to the table roast or in pies, and quantities of small birds. A pie, in which slices of veal were mixed with plums, may be considered the beginning of our tasty mincepie. Both oxen and sheep were rossted whole, the carvers seldom using forks, but having cut the meat by knife or dagger, they tore it asunder with their hands. Huge were the caldrons of plum porridge, for this was, it is supposed, the original form of plumpudding. The consumption of ale, wines, hypocras, and other liquors of the olden time, which we only know by name, was astonishing. But it is some excuse for our forefathers' indulgence in these things that they had no such beverages as tea, coffee, and cocoa; no, nor had they gingerbeer, lemonade, or similar effervescents.

The morris-dancers, though not belonging only to Christmas, for we read about their appearance on other holidays, helped on the Christmas merriment, and went through dances, or other fantastic movements, to the sound of the pipe and tabor. Then there were also the mummers, distinct from the morris-dancers, about whose doings we have not much information, though at one period they took a prominent part in the Christmas festivities. The practice of mumming has been thought an off-shoot from the old custom of

acting miracle-plays or mysteries; but we presume that the mummers were 'mum,' that is, they performed a dumb show. Gentlemen, as well as common folk, appeared in the dress of mummers; for we are told that in 1400 twelve aldermen and their sons came as mummers before the king at Eltham Palace, and his majesty thanked them for their performance. The dresses worn by the mummers were very splendid, and of various fashions. In the reign of Henry IV. a plot was got up to kill him by means of a party of Christmas mummers, and it was only discovered an hour or two before the attempt was to be made. Another Henry, the bluff king Hal, forbad this mumming, and punished offenders with imprisonment.

We have many accounts of curious local customs connected with Christmas, some of which are kept up to the present time. Thus, at Dewsbury, in Yorkshire, the bell used to be tolled, as for a funeral, on Christmas Eve, this being called the 'devil's knell,' and it was understood to mean that when Christ was born the devil died, or at least received sentence of death, though the punishment was delayed. It was not, however, at Dewsbury, but at some other country town, that a traveller was startled by this inscription upon a wall, 'Satan died here.' He was led to inquire into so singular an occurrence, and discovered that it was a case of mis-spelling two words!

Surely we ought not to quit the subject of Christmas without referring to that pretty and mysterious plant the misletoe, still so interesting to young people. Its history begins from the time when our ancestors were only savages. On special days the early Britons went out in solemn procession to cut this parasitic plant in the dense woods of oak, where it seems at one time to have been frequent. In our day it is seldom found upon the oak tree. The Druids headed the party, and the tree having been reached from which the misletoe was to be gathered, two white bulls were bound to the trunk, and the principal priest, in his white robes, was lifted within reach of the plant, which he cut off with a golden knife. Then followed sacrifices of animals: sometimes, it is supposed, of human victims. The misletoe was finally divided into small sprigs and given to the people, who believed that it had a powerful influence in drawing to their houses those deities of the woods whose protection was desired. There are several old Welsh names for this plant, which, possibly, have come down from the ancient Britons. One of these is uchel far, meaning 'high branch,' in allusion to its mode of growth; another was hoenlys, which is, translated, the 'joy of the hall.' Yet it is a noticeable fact that in Wales, where British customs have survived the longest, the misletoe is now disregarded. During the period in

which the Romans ruled our land, this plant was in little esteem, but the Saxons, like other northern nations, held it in deep reverence. The Romish priests, during later times, forbad the use of misletoe for any church decorations; the country folk, nevertleless, held to the old belief about its sacredness, and some attributed to the plant a miraculous power of curing diseases.

The misletoe is now, in several parts of England, cultivated for the purpose of sale; but it is frequently found growing wild in the orchards of Herefordshire and Worcestershire, chiefly upon the apple, seldom on the pear, and occasionally on hawthorn, lime, willow, and a few other trees.

Modern research, I may remark in conclusion, does rather lead us to the belief that the true time of our Lord's birth was not in winter but in spring. Coming, however, towards the close of the year, and at a season when the short and dull days tend to make us social, it is likely that Christmas will hold its own against any proposals for a change in its date, and many a heart throbs at the sound of the Christmas bells, heard in the dark of early morn, and which seem to say:

'Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace, Peace and goodwill to all mankind.'



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